

Master Thesis

Achieving A Nuclear Deal: A Track II Diplomacy Analysis of the US-Iran Nuclear Relations



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Abstract

This thesis analyses the influence of track II diplomacy on the development of the bilateral nuclear relationship between the United States and Iran that resulted in the nuclear deal in 2015. Primary sources primarily from the American government on foreign relations and nuclear diplomacy have been used to analyse official American nuclear policy towards Iran. Also, an interview with former Canadian diplomat and track II participant and scholar Peter Jones has been conducted to gain further insight in the inner workings of track II diplomacy. Secondary literature on nuclear diplomacy, track II diplomacy and US-Iranian nuclear relations has been extensively studied. My analysis shows that track II diplomacy influenced the nuclear deal, although this cannot be proven empirically. The research has found that multiple participants in track II initiatives either formerly occupied high-level government positions or moved to these positions later in the Obama administration and became part of the groups who officially negotiated the nuclear deal. By analysing the measurements of track II success: the establishment of relationships based on trust, respect and mutual understanding, the quality of the participants attending the various initiatives, to what extent both sides perceive occurring change and the transmission of knowledge to the leaders of government on all sides as a result of the initiatives, in combination with the experiences and outcomes of track II participants and initiatives, it can be concluded that track II diplomacy did influence the outcome of the nuclear deal between the United States and Iran. Both Iranian and American participants of track II initiatives became acquainted with each other's standpoints and this facilitated track I diplomatic efforts. Subsequent research is needed to further analyse all the various track II diplomatic actors. Furthermore, analysing the role of track II diplomacy might prove useful when researching other major geopolitical events, as it portrays unofficial aspect of diplomacy.

Keywords: Diplomacy, nuclear diplomacy, track II diplomacy, unofficial diplomacy, nuclear weapons, nuclear relations, JCPOA, Iran, the United States, non-proliferation

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List of Abbreviations

ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
AEOI	Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty
DDRS	Declassified Documents Reference System
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
EU	European Union
ERDA	Energy Research and Development Administration
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GWMDZF	Gulf Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Association
INEGMA	the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis
INFCE	International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation
INTC	Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
JCPOA	Comprehensive Plan of Action
LDC	Least Developed Country
LRTNF	Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces
NATO	North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIAC	National Iranian American Council
NPT	Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

NTI	Nuclear Threat Initiative
NWS	Nuclear Weapon State
PTBT	Partial Test Ban Treaty
P5+1	Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies
SDI	Strategic Defense Initiative
TNRC	Tehran Nuclear Research Center
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UNA	United Nations Association
US	United States
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction

Chapter 1

1.0: Introduction

Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the United States and Iran have not had any formal diplomatic relations. This has proven to be troublesome, especially regarding solving issues around Iran's nuclear programme. The relationship between the United States and Iran, particularly in the field of nuclear development, has shaped the interactions between the two countries. Since the dawn of the Cold War, Iran was seen by many in Washington as a regional bastion against growing Communist influences and as a friendly regime, ready to promote America's interest in the Middle East. Diplomatic efforts were initiated to ensure Iran participated in establishing a peaceful civilian nuclear sector, provided for by the United States. Following civil unrest in Iran and the subsequent Islamic Revolution in 1979, all diplomatic contact between the two countries was broken and sanctions were placed on Iran, gradually crippling its economy. Thereafter, Iran's leadership engaged increasingly with the Soviet Union – and later Russia – to fill the void left by the Americans and to further advance its nuclear programme.

The development of Iran's nuclear programme was affected by both international agreements and supranational control. Iran is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its nuclear programme came under heavy surveillance of the International Atomic Energy Association, which, as rumours grew of Iran's illicit and potential military use of the nuclear programme, brought the case forward at the United Nation's Security Council in 2006, resulting in the implementation of economic sanctions on Iran. In this context, so-called "track II diplomacy" becomes crucial to understanding the development of Iran's nuclear program vis-à-vis a growing preoccupation of international and multilateral actors, including Washington. Track II diplomatic efforts were present since the Cold War, but they grew in quantity and quality after the Islamic Revolution due to the lack of official diplomatic options. Track II efforts regarding Iran's nuclear programme became even more crucial when various international and non-governmental organisations tried to acquire knowledge and understanding of Iran's nuclear programme from high-level officials. As this thesis will argue, these occurring exchanges of information among unofficial channels exerted a fundamental influence on the establishment of the nuclear deal in 2015.

This thesis will focus on the track II diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran towards the Nuclear Deal that was signed in 2015. It will analyse how track II diplomatic relations have affected the bilateral relations between the two countries towards that goal. An

analysis of how the relations between Iran and the United States have developed in the field of nuclear diplomacy is crucial. To what extent track II diplomacy has aided or hindered negotiations towards the nuclear agreement is a question that will be analysed in-depth. The thesis will also analyse the unofficial channels of diplomacy and investigate what the (back)channels are, when and how they originated, the actors involved in them and how they operated. The research question is therefore as follows: *How has track II diplomacy affected the bilateral relations between the US and Iran regarding the 2015 nuclear agreement?*

In response to this question, the thesis will try to connect a variety of interrelated subjects. There is a great deal of research done on US-Iran relations, but this thesis analyses that relation through non-state track II diplomacy in relation to the 2015 nuclear deal. The combination of these three different aspects will create an interesting and original way of looking at the US-Iran exchanges and development of their nuclear relations. The main focus will therefore be on the role of international organisations and track II diplomacy. The current academic debate on the nuclear deal mostly concerns official US-Iranian relations. This thesis will focus on the unofficial side of nuclear diplomacy. This may lead to more use of this approach in the future to analyse a wide scale of case-studies in which the unofficial tracks of diplomacy were prominently present.

1.1: Methodology

This thesis will rely on the tools of history writing. A wide variety of secondary sources concerning formal and informal nuclear diplomacy, the relation between the United States and Iran and the 2015 Nuclear Deal are researched in order to answer the main and sub-research questions. Primary source material has also been researched, predominantly from actors in the field of track II nuclear diplomacy who are concerned with US-Iranian relations or the 2015 nuclear deal, such as NGOs, scholars, advisory groups and more, to get first-hand information and be able to analyse the role of track II diplomacy in this case-study. Furthermore, these primary sources are useful to assess the influence that this track of diplomacy has had on the nuclear relation between Iran and the United States. Thereafter, this can function as a tool for future case studies focused on track II diplomacy in other events.

1.2: Theoretical framework

The main theoretical concepts used throughout this thesis are diplomacy, track II diplomacy and nuclear diplomacy. The International Relations theories of Realism and Liberalism are used due to their strong views on nuclear weapons and non-proliferation and are consulted to analyse the developments of the US-Iranian nuclear relation.

Diplomacy is often described as a tool that enables states to achieve the objectives of their foreign policy without the need to resort to the use of force.¹ The acts to achieve these goals are usually carried out by professional diplomatic agents and other individuals authorised to act in the name of their state.² This official form of diplomacy is often carried out through embassies or consulates which are recognised by both parties and which have to abide by the laws of their home country. Diplomacy can take place across a wide variety of places from which authority, power and influence is exerted. These mainly consist of states but also religious organisations, NGO's, multinational corporations or individuals.³ Diplomacy is often characterised by the relationships between states which are structured according to peaceful resolutions and are conducted by and among international actors from which at least one is usually representing a government.⁴ Diplomacy can be summarised as the entrenched method of exerting influence on the decisions and behaviour of governments of other states and people through the use of dialogue, negotiations and other measures without having to resort to war or other forms of violence.⁵

In a Foreign Policy article from 1982, William Davidson and Joseph Montville made the distinction between track I diplomacy and track II diplomacy. The first being official and traditional policy statements, for example, made by officials, whilst they describe the second as unofficial and nonstructured interactions.⁶ According to Peter Jones, there is lack of a general consensus regarding a definition of the term.⁷ Jones argues that the definition is unclear since no two instances of track II diplomacy are ever the same and the actors involved also vary immensely.⁸ Nevertheless, the term can best be described as unofficial attempts to diplomacy which bring together experts and interest groups through universities, institutions and non-governmental organisations to actively engage in policy discussions and promote engagement and

¹ G. R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (Springer, 2015), 1.

² Berridge, 1.

³ Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.001.0001>.

⁴ Cooper, Heine, and Thakur, 2.

⁵ “Diplomacy | Nature, Purpose, History, & Practice”, Encyclopedia Britannica, consulted on 22 January 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/diplomacy>.

⁶ William D. Davidson and Joseph V. Montville, “Foreign Policy According to Freud”, *Foreign Policy*, nr. 45 (1981): 145–57, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148317>.

⁷ Peter Jones, *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 7.

⁸ Jones, *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*, 8.

awareness of a certain issue.⁹ Track II diplomacy is often referred to as unofficial mediation or private diplomacy and is used in order to differentiate between governmental and non-governmental diplomacy.¹⁰ Furthermore, it indicates that mediation and dialogue should not be the sole domain of political elites but should occur at different levels of society.¹¹

The post-WWII world has experienced significant change in the field of nuclear diplomacy and many opinions have been voiced on this development. Nuclear diplomacy can best be explained as diplomacy in the post-1945 age in which the threat of the use of nuclear weapons was ever present. In numerous crises over the years, the American government indicated a willingness to resort to nuclear force to counter possible military initiatives by its adversaries, if necessary.¹² Gar Alperovitz was the first to discuss the influence that these new nuclear weapons would exert on future diplomacy in the post WW-II era.¹³ The nuclear diplomacy engagement between the United States and Iran can be divided into three parts: the Critical Dialogue (1992-1997), the Comprehensive Dialogue (1998-2003) – the period in which engagement was encouraged in an effort to avoid another major US-led conflict in the Middle East – and the last period between 2005 and 2012 which consisted of mainly coercive nuclear diplomacy.¹⁴ Only during the last period did the United States actively participate in the P5+1 – the five permanent members of the United Nation's Security Council and Germany – framework to come to a nuclear agreement with Iran.¹⁵ Nuclear energy had first been an option for Iran in order for it to diversify its energy sources, since that was the perception of what future energy markets would be based on.¹⁶ Western powers competed among each other to appease the Iranian ambitions towards this technology.¹⁷ Over the years, American governments grew

⁹ Jones, *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*, 10.

¹⁰ Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 276, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.001.0001>.

¹¹ Cooper, Heine, and Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, 276.

¹² Sean Lynn-Jones, Steven Miller, and Stephen Van Evera, "Nuclear Diplomacy and Crisis Management", The MIT Press, 39, consulted on 22 January 2020, <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/nuclear-diplomacy-and-crisis-management>.

¹³ Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1995), 169.

¹⁴ Bernd Kaussler, "Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy: Power Politics and Conflict Resolution", CRC Press, 94, consulted on 22 January 2020, <https://www.crcpress.com/Irans-Nuclear-Diplomacy-Power-politics-and-conflict-resolution/Kaussler/p/book/9781138900875>.

¹⁵ Kaussler, "Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy: Power Politics and Conflict Resolution," 94.

¹⁶ Kaussler, III.

¹⁷ Kaussler, 'Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy', III.

distrustful of providing Iran with the technology and materials which might prove too great a temptation for Iran and would result in weaponisation and proliferation.¹⁸ The negotiations between the United States and Iran, the Geneva Process with the P5+1 and the agreement of the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), demonstrate the ongoing nuclear diplomacy towards Iran's nuclear programme.¹⁹

Nuclear diplomacy, the use of nuclear weapons and their proliferation have been widely discussed in international relations theory as well. Well-known Realist Kenneth Waltz has often argued that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is not a serious problem, as its spread has been slow and countries that possess nuclear weapons tend to behave more cautiously.²⁰ Waltz indicated his understanding of the Iranian quest towards nuclear weapons by pointing out the regional threat facing Iran, as well as the threat of the United States, as justifications for Iran's nuclear objectives, as it seeks to ensure its survival and sovereignty.²¹ Liberal theorists argued that non-proliferation efforts would continue in a cooperative manner after the Cold War due to the importance of upholding the nuclear status-quo.²² Furthermore, Liberalists disregard the Realist notion of power politics and argued that nuclear deterrence, predominantly through the construction of international organisations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, has contributed to stability and peace.²³ This thesis shows that both Iran's efforts towards its own survival and sovereignty as well as the construction of transnational organisations have influenced nuclear diplomacy between the US and Iran.

1.3: Timeframe

This thesis will cover the period from 1953 until 2015, when the nuclear deal was signed and came into effect. The first chapter will cover the development of the nuclear relation from 1953 until the end of the first Cold War and focus on the outset of the US-Iranian nuclear relation. Chapter two will look at the period prior to the Islamic Revolution and cover predominantly the

¹⁸ Kaussler, 'Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy,' III.

¹⁹ Kumuda Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran: From the War on Terror to the Obama Administration* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 119.

²⁰ Scott Sagan, Kenneth Waltz, and Richard K. Betts, 'A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?', *Journal of International Affairs* 60, nr. 2 (2007): 137.

²¹ Sagan et al.: 'A Nuclear Iran: Promoting Stability or Courting Disaster?', 137.

²² Zachary S. Davis, 'The Realist Nuclear Regime', *Security Studies* 2, nr. 3–4 (1 June 1993): 79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419309347520>.

²³ G. John Ikenberry, 'Liberal internationalism 3.0: America and the dilemmas of liberal world order', *Perspectives on politics* 7, nr. 1 (2009): 79.

1970s. The next chapter will focus on the deteriorating nuclear relationship between the countries towards the end of the 1970s. Thereafter, the Iranian Islamic Revolution is analysed as well as the new US-Iran nuclear relationship. The subsequent chapter will focus on the development of the post-revolutionary relationship. Thereafter, the post 9/11 era and Iran's increasing development of its nuclear programme in the absence of American diplomacy is analysed. The last two chapters will look at the return of Western influence on Iran's nuclear programme, as suspicions over Iran's potentially destructive nuclear programme resulted in extensive monitoring and sanctions. These will analyse the development of the nuclear relation towards the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the influence of track II diplomacy and its actors thereon. Various track II efforts, initiatives and participants are analysed to conclude whether or not track II diplomacy impacted the nuclear deal. The importance of this thesis is the combination of a long-term historical analysis of the development of nuclear relations between the United States and Iran in combination with the influence of unofficial, track II diplomacy.

1.4: Sources

For this thesis, primary sources have been used to analyse America's official policy towards Iran and its nuclear programme. Furthermore, I have conducted an interview with Professor Peter Jones of the University of Ottawa regarding the influence of track II diplomacy on the nuclear deal. An interview with Gary Sick, former member of the US Security Council and scholar and participant of track II dialogues was planned, but unfortunately cancelled as a result of the Corona crisis. Secondary literature in the form of books, academic and news articles, policy papers and track II reports has been extensively consulted.

Chapter 2: Historiography

2.0: Track II Diplomacy

A crucial first step to initiate this analysis has been G.R. Berridge's book *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, which covers a wide range of topics related to diplomacy. It discusses diplomatic negotiations, diplomatic relations using embassies, consulates, public diplomacy and secret intelligence gathering. Chapter three of this book explicitly discusses diplomacy without diplomatic relations and is therefore of great importance for this thesis. Berridge argues that diplomacy is carried out by means of many different channels besides the traditional resident mission. It is these non-traditional channels that this thesis seeks to research.²⁴ Peter Jones expands on this in *Track Two Diplomacy: In Theory and Practice*, where he discusses the definition of track II diplomacy.²⁵ Jones comes to the conclusion that the term itself is hard to define, because its meaning changes depending on the event as well as the actors that are discussed.²⁶ The term is useful, but one has to define it according to the case-study that is being researched. Other authors are less reluctant to give a clear definition of the term, which makes Jones' point important to keep in mind when researching the topic. Cynthia Chataway's *In Practice: Track II Diplomacy: From a Track I Perspective* also discusses the way diplomacy has changed over the years, and the role that individual agents have on the diplomatic process. This article is focused on track II, or what she calls 'nonofficial diplomacy,' and presents the views of numerous American diplomats to find what the potential contributions of track II diplomacy could be and how individuals have made use of track II diplomacy. She argues that more and more diplomats come to see the usefulness of track II diplomacy in reaching societies where there may no longer be any official diplomacy present, such as in Iran and the United States since the revolution. The author discusses the growing role of track II diplomacy and describes the evolution of track II diplomacy from being 'meddlers and the enemy' to the accepted sentiment that modern conflicts cannot be resolved without a combination of track I and II diplomacy.²⁷

Other sources, such as Charles Lipson's *Why are Some International Agreements Informal?*, *Process Peace: A New Evaluation Framework for Track II Diplomacy* by Nathaniel Allen and Travis Sharp, and Joseph Montville's *Track Two Diplomacy: The Work of Healing History* and *The Arrow and the Olive Branch: A Case for Track Two Diplomacy* are useful to better understand the fundamentals

²⁴ Berridge, *Diplomacy*.

²⁵ Jones, Peter, *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*.

²⁶ Jones, *Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*.

²⁷ Cynthia J. Chataway, 'Track II Diplomacy: From a Track I Perspective In Practice', *Negotiation Journal* 14, nr. 3 (1998): 269–88.

and dynamics of track II diplomacy.²⁸ In particular, these sources reveal how a high degree of subjectivity and contingency affect the development of informal diplomatic relations, a factor that would prove to be crucial in the negotiations of the Iran nuclear deal as well.

2.1: US-Iran Relations

In order to gather information about the bilateral relations between the US and Iran, how they developed and what interests have been shaping them, an important starting point has been Carl Brown's book *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regionals and Outside powers*. There, Brown describes the history of Iranian relations with the US and its neighbours in the region. Arguing that the Shah took great pride in his relations with the United States and the contrast of this to the relation between the United States and Iran after the revolution, when the United States were seen as the 'great Satan' and 'enemy of the Islamic Republic.' Brown also points out that in Iran, different government agencies seemed to be pursuing their own policies independent of the state. Security agencies, for example, did not always abide by government policy and pursued their own interests. This is interesting, for it shows informal diplomacy fulfilling a role within the country and sometimes against the expressed policy of that state.²⁹ The focus on Iran's domestic political dimension is an important advantage of Brown's book, as well as the emphasis on the broader geopolitical context. Donette Murray's book *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations Since the Islamic Revolution* continues the broader geopolitical aspect of their relation. This book is particularly fitting to this thesis, as it provides a detailed description of the relations between the United States and Iran after the revolution and is incredibly useful in regard to research for this thesis. Since the book also discusses American policy in the Carter and Reagan periods, it is a crucial book to use to analyse diplomatic and relational developments.³⁰

William Dorman and Mansour Farhang's *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Deference* is a somewhat different but still relevant source for this thesis. The book focuses on the public perception of Iran that was created after the revolution in 1979 and how this influenced US policymaking. Additionally, it goes into detail about diplomatic action of

²⁸ Joseph V. Montville, "Track Two Diplomacy: The Work of Healing History The Changing Nature of Diplomacy", *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 7, nr. 1 (2006): 15–26; John W. McDonald and Diane B. Bendahmane, *Conflict Resolution: Track Two Diplomacy* (Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, 1987); Charles Lipson, "Why are Some International Agreements Informal?", *International Organization* 45, nr. 4 (1991): 495–538. Nathaniel Allen and Travis Sharp, "Process Peace: A New Evaluation Framework for Track II Diplomacy", *International Negotiation* 22, nr. 1 (2017): 92–122, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718069-12341349>.

²⁹ L. Carl Brown, *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers* (I.B. Tauris, 2003).

³⁰ Donette Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations since the Islamic Revolution* (Routledge, 2009).

several US institutions. It also covers the role that journalists have played as actors of track II diplomacy.³¹ Related to this, Alan James' *Diplomacy* discusses the concept of 'protecting powers' which both the United States and Iran have been using to justify, to the international and their own public, their diplomatic conduct toward each other. According to James, these protecting powers have been used when other ways of communication needed to be found after diplomatic relations had been broken. Since this is exactly what happened between the United States and Iran, this source is relevant and useful and connects well to other above-mentioned sources on track II diplomacy and US-Iran relations.³²

In their 2005 paper *Who Influences US Foreign Policy*, Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page conduct research on the variety of actors that influence US foreign policy in international relations. They argue that US foreign policy is, to a great extent, influenced by business leaders and experts, and that the general public plays a significantly smaller part. It is interesting to connect these findings to track II diplomacy and see how these actors played a role in the relation between Iran and the United States after the revolution, and if their influence was significant or not.³³ In this regard, Alex Edward's *Dual Containment: Policy in the Persian Gulf, The USA, Iran and Iraq 1991-2000* allows for a better focus on the policy of dual containment, which was designed to decrease the influence of Iran and Iraq in the Middle East and highlight the stance of the United States towards Iran post-revolution.³⁴ The book concentrates on the US-Iran relation after 1979 and predominantly on America's growing entanglement in the security affairs of the Persian Gulf.³⁵ The scope of this book makes it incredibly interesting for the aim of this thesis, for it looks into the US' role in the security dimensions of Iran, of which the 2015 nuclear deal is a good example.

Ofira Seliktar's *Navigating Iran: From Carter to Obama* discusses the stances of multiple American administrations towards Iran and focuses on the containment efforts towards Iran.³⁶

³¹ William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Deference* (University of California Press, 1988).

³² Alan James, "Diplomacy", *Review of International Studies* 19, nr. 1 (January 1993): 91–100, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021050011736X>.

³³ Lawrence R. Jacobs and Benjamin I. Page, "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?", *The American Political Science Review* 99, nr. 1 (2005): 107–23.

³⁴ Alex Edwards, "Dual Containment" *Policy in the Persian Gulf* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137447241>.

³⁵ Edwards, "Dual Containment" *Policy in the Persian Gulf*, 1.

³⁶ O. Seliktar, *Navigating Iran: From Carter to Obama* (New York: Springer, 2012), 1.

This book covers all the different aspects of Iranian policies that are of interest to the United States. Seliktar discusses nuclear proliferation, the export by Iran of revolutionary movements, its support for international terrorist organisations, Iran's undermining of, and reluctance towards, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and widespread human rights violations.³⁷ Seliktar also compares some of the developments that take place in Iran and shows how they are perceived in Washington.³⁸ This book is useful because it shows how Iranian policies are interpreted in the United States and therefore has the ability to explain why certain groups involved in track II diplomacy take certain actions. A good addition to this traditional political approach is *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* by Ali M. Ansari, who focuses on Carter's and Reagan's administrations. Ansari discusses the role of President Carter and his stance towards Iran and how that affected the escalating situation at the time. This source is interesting for the historical perspective and the way it discusses the two different American administrations and their stances towards Iran.³⁹

To broaden the perspective about US-Iran relations and frame them in a wider, global context, a book such as Dalia Dassa Kaye's *Talking to the Enemy: Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia*, which contains two remarkably interesting and useful chapters, is important. In the first: *Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy*, Kaye speaks of the increase in track two diplomacy since the Cold War and that foundations, NGO's, universities and governments, among other institutions, devoted significant financial and human resources to establish these informal relations. She argues that the literature that currently exists on track two diplomacy is limited and focused mostly on the conflict resolution field, offering a mostly positive assessment whilst at the same time overstating the effect of such informal contacts. She also argues that in the Middle East and South Asia, track two diplomacy has mostly focused on long-term socialisation and the creation of new ideas, not on policy changes. She argues that the attempts made to associate track two diplomacy dialogues with tangible policy outcomes for the resolution of conflicts needs to be reassessed. In order to shape regional relations and constructing a regional security structure which is feasible, she argues for a plan consisting of three parts: socialisation of participating elites, filtering of externally generated policy ideas to the local environment and transmission to official policy. This creates the much needed framework to analyse if these steps also took place

³⁷ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*.

³⁸ Seliktar.

³⁹ Ali M. Ansari, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* (Hurst Publishers, 2006).

between the United States and Iran. In the second chapter on *Regional Dialogues in the Middle East* Kaye extends on this.⁴⁰

Nader Entessar and Kaveh Afrasiabi's *Iran Nuclear Accord and the Remaking of the Middle East* discusses all the facets of the Iran Nuclear Deal. This is done by giving a comprehensive examination of the Iran nuclear deal and the implications it has for the wider Middle East.⁴¹ This book discusses everything from the accord itself, its multiple revisions and adjustments, its status in international law, how the deal shaped Iran's foreign policy and the consequences for Iran's geopolitics.⁴² Most interesting for this thesis is the chapter on the drivers of the nuclear accord.

2.3: Nuclear Relations and Diplomacy

In regard to the United States' and Iran' nuclear relationship and nuclear policymaking, a more applicable, specific and evolving body of secondary literature has been consulted. James Thomson's 1984 *The LRTNF decision: evolution of US theatre nuclear policy, 1975-9* argues that the United States as the chief nuclear power of the NATO alliance had the power to initiate change in nuclear policy.⁴³ Thomson's paper is based on the RAND Corporation's own 1980 study on Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces (LRTNF). In this study, 14 of the 15 NATO member states, with the exclusion of France, agree to a plan to start modernising NATO's so-called in-theatre Long-Range Theatre Nuclear Forces in order to counter similar efforts made by the Soviet Union years earlier.⁴⁴ The document further indicates efforts made by the political and military representatives of the fourteen NATO countries to engage in multilateral discussions with representatives of the Warsaw Pact in order to limit the deployment and possible use of intermediate-range weapons on both sides of the conflict.⁴⁵ This source shows the playing field

⁴⁰ Dalia Dassa Kaye, "Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy", in *Talking to the Enemy*, 1ste pr., Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia (RAND Corporation, 2007), 1–30, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg592nsrd.8; Dalia Dassa Kaye, "Regional Security Dialogues in the Middle East", in *Talking to the Enemy*, 1ste pr., Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia (RAND Corporation, 2007), 31–74, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg592nsrd.9.

⁴¹ Nader Entessar and Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, *Iran Nuclear Accord and the Remaking of the Middle East* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1.

⁴² Entessar and Afrasiabi, *Iran Nuclear Accord and the Remaking of the Middle East*.

⁴³ James A. Thomson, "The LRTNF Decision: Evolution of US Theatre Nuclear Policy, 1975–9", *International Affairs* 60, nr. 4 (1 October 1984): 601, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2620044>.

⁴⁴ Kevin N. Lewis, "Long-Range Theater Nuclear Forces": Product Page, 1980, 1, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P6510.html>.

⁴⁵ Lewis, 2.

during the Cold War in terms of nuclear diplomacy and policy-making, and will prove crucial when trying to sketch the geopolitical reality of nuclear diplomacy in the Cold War.

Charles Glazer's 1990 book *Analysing Strategic Nuclear Policy* discusses the American Nuclear Doctrine and the influence that the Cold War had on nuclear weapons policy.⁴⁶ Glazer argues that, for the foreseeable future, the United States should pursue policies designed to avoid nuclear war or the possibilities thereof while at the same time maximally protecting itself from the possibilities of a nuclear attack.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the book gives an extensive analysis on the issues that surround the American nuclear strategy.⁴⁸ Glazer argues that nuclear weapons were believed to be crucial in reducing the chance of a superpower war, while at the same time being incredibly dangerous, for the Soviet Union now possessed the ability to destroy the United States.⁴⁹ Even though this source shows American nuclear diplomacy primarily from a Cold War perspective in which the Soviet Union was the great adversary, the source is nonetheless useful in establishing a understanding of how nuclear diplomacy and policy-making was at the time.

Stephen A. Cambone and Patrick J. Garrity in *The Future of US Nuclear Policy* discuss how president Clinton was expected to drastically reorient the American nuclear strategy towards reducing the nuclear danger that faced the United States and the rest of the world.⁵⁰ As agreements to decrease their nuclear arsenal were made, the United States and the Soviet Union unilaterally took steps towards that cause.⁵¹ The authors also argue that the United States attempted to support the denuclearisation of various global areas by way of supporting a variety of political, economic and military incentives and conduct nuclear diplomacy with states that are not in the Non-Proliferation Treaty's framework.⁵² Furthermore, its stated goal for the Persian Gulf was to contain Iran's nuclear, missile and chemical and biological ambitions.⁵³

In *Iran's Nuclear Calculations*, Ray Takeyh discusses the beginning of Iran's nuclear programme as it operated an installation in Bushehr near the Persian Gulf, which provided Iran with an alternative source of energy and which was closely monitored by the International

⁴⁶ Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton University Press, 2014), ix.

⁴⁷ Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy*, ix.

⁴⁸ Glaser, 3.

⁴⁹ Glaser, 3.

⁵⁰ Stephen A. Cambone and Patrick J. Garrity, "The Future of US Nuclear Policy", *Survival* 36, nr. 4 (1 December 1994): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339408442764>.

⁵¹ Cambone and Garrity, "The Future of US Nuclear Policy," 73.

⁵² Cambone and Garrity, 86-87.

⁵³ Cambone and Garrity, 86-87.

Atomic Energy Association (IAEA).⁵⁴ The source discusses the growing European and American concern that, under the pretence of using its facilities for purely civilian purposes, Iran would accumulate sufficient knowledge and expertise to be able to create a nuclear weapon in the future.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the document lays out the American discovery of extensive Iranian research facilities that would enable them to produce nuclear weapons.⁵⁶ The assessment of Iran's nuclear programme continues with *The Iranian Nuclear Challenge* by Wyn Bowen and Joanna Kidd, who discuss the controversies around Iran's nuclear weapons programme by looking at Iran's official stance.⁵⁷ This included Iran's stated commitment towards non-proliferation and continues to assess Iran's failure to meet the obligations to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty and its nuclear safeguard agreement with the IAEA.⁵⁸ The source also analyses Iran's motivations for obtaining a nuclear weapon as well as the response of the United States thereof.⁵⁹

In regards to America's response to Iran's nuclear efforts, Stephen Cimbala discusses the destabilising effect that nuclear weapons will have in the 21st century and how these once feared weapons will be underestimated by newer political leaders in his book *Nuclear Weapons and Strategy: US Nuclear Policy for the Twenty-First Century*.⁶⁰ He furthermore discusses the nuclear policy of the United States through the 1970s until the early 2000s, as the United States is engaged in wars in the Middle East, and discusses the problems with nuclear proliferation in regards to rogue states and terrorist organisations.⁶¹ In addition, Scott Sagan's article *How to Keep the Bomb from Iran* analyses America's conflict with a hostile Iranian regime that attempts to gain access to nuclear weapons.⁶² In his paper, Sagan argues that Iran will need to freeze its nuclear capabilities and its support for overseas terrorism, whilst the United States should issue a statement in which it respects Iran's sovereignty and promise to promote democracy by peaceful means instead of through the threat of conflict.⁶³ The article also discusses how the Bush administration planned

⁵⁴ Ray Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations', *World Policy Journal* 20, nr. 2 (2003): 21.

⁵⁵ Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations,' 21.

⁵⁶ Takeyh, 21.

⁵⁷ Takeyh, 21.

⁵⁸ Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, "The Iranian Nuclear Challenge", *International Affairs* 80, nr. 2 (1 March 2004): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2004.00382.x>.

⁵⁹ Bowen and Kidd, "The Iranian Nuclear Challenge," 257–58.

⁶⁰ Stephen J. Cimbala, *Nuclear Weapons and Strategy: US Nuclear Policy for the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2006), 1.

⁶¹ Cimbala, 3.

⁶² Scott D. Sagan, 'How to Keep the Bomb from Iran', *Foreign Affairs* 85, nr. 5 (2006): 45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20032069>.

⁶³ Sagan, 'How to Keep the Bomb from Iran,' 59.

to deter Iran from continuing its nuclear programme if negotiations would fail.⁶⁴ As this article was written in 2006, it is interesting to look back at the policy recommendations that were made in regards to US-Iran relations and Iran's nuclear capabilities.

For a large part, the development of the nuclear relationship between Iran and the United States takes place in the period post-Cold War. Nick Ritchie's *US Nuclear Weapons Policy after the Cold War* provides an in-depth analysis of America's nuclear weapons policy since the end of the Cold War.⁶⁵ The source goes in-depth into nuclear forces structures, arms control, regional strategies and the weapons production complex and the shifts in American nuclear policy and argues that American nuclear policy did not develop in a linear, rational and consistent direction.⁶⁶ The book furthermore describes the role of the IAEA and the multilateral agreements in regards to nuclear policy from the 1960s onwards.⁶⁷ In *No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy*, Michael Gerson argues that the United States' nuclear weapons policy has always been that it should have the option to use nuclear weapons first in conflict, but that multiple administrations have retained for using that option.⁶⁸ President Obama argued in 2009 that nuclear weapons should play less of a role in the national security strategy of the United States and urged other nuclear powers to follow its lead.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, as this is seen as a nuclear policy change, Gerson argues that the signed non-proliferation treaty leaves open the option for the United States to use nuclear weapons to engage in a preemptive or preventative strike against, for example, a nuclear Iran in the future, even when the threat is conventional and not nuclear.⁷⁰

The following sources discuss the initial American aid towards Iran's nuclear programme. Greg Bruno's *Iran's Nuclear Program* analyses the historical development of Iran's pursuit towards nuclear energy. Bruno describes how Iran received American help throughout the 1970s and how this ended with the 1979 revolution in the country.⁷¹ Although the West was aware of Iran's civilian nuclear programme in the 1990s, the discovery of more clandestine research that came to

⁶⁴ Sagan, 'How to Keep the Bomb from Iran,' 46.

⁶⁵ Nick Ritchie, *US nuclear weapons policy after the Cold War: Russians, 'rogues' and domestic division* (Routledge, 2008).

⁶⁶ Ritchie, *US nuclear weapons policy after the Cold War: Russians, 'rogues' and domestic division*, 1.

⁶⁷ Ritchie, 1.

⁶⁸ Michael S. Gerson, 'No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy', *International Security* 35, nr. 2 (17 september 2010): 7, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00018.

⁶⁹ Gerson, 'No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy,' 7.

⁷⁰ Gerson, 8.

⁷¹ Greg Bruno, 'Iran's nuclear program', *Council on Foreign Relations* 10 (2010): 1.

light in the early 2000s altered American nuclear diplomatic relations to the country.⁷² This source furthermore describes the evolution of Iran's nuclear programme since the 1950s and how US strategy adapted to these changes. In William Burr's article for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* *A Brief History of US-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations*, the author argues that even as Iran sought to establish a nuclear energy sector that would turn it into a modern and powerful state, Iran's nuclear intentions were always unclear and led to intense concerns.⁷³ The document describes the cooperation between Iran and the United States in the field of nuclear policy prior to the revolution in 1979 and the development of nuclear policy-making by various leaders of both countries.⁷⁴

2.4: Primary sources

Along with literature, this thesis also relies on a large number of primary sources. Due to language restrictions, they are all in English and mostly originate from the US government. These are complemented with papers of non-governmental organisations and groups involved in track II dialogues and efforts around nuclear diplomacy to the best of my ability. Most of the primary sources that analyse nuclear cooperation between the United States and Iran come from the collections of the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, which I have extensively analysed. These sources are available through the Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS). The various volumes of the Foreign Relations of the United States, available through the Office of the Historian, have been extensively used to analyse its containing primary sources. These primary sources mostly contain important policy decisions and high-level discussions on issues regarding the US-Iran relation and nuclear diplomacy and policy.

Some NGOs, think tanks, private and non-state groups that have fostered US-Iranian nuclear relations are also worth mentioning. The University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation has hosted international dialogues and provided leadership in regard to preventative diplomacy and dialogue in the most troublesome regions of the world through their Track II programmes, in which officials and academics express their views and enhance mutual understanding in an informal atmosphere. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs is an institution that facilitates track 1.5 and track II dialogues. They also organise creative discussions on ways to increase the security of different opposing sides in conflict and promote

⁷² Bruno, 'Iran's nuclear program,' 1.

⁷³ William Burr, "A Brief History of U.S.-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 65, nr. 1 (1 January 2009): 21, <https://doi.org/10.2968/065001004>.

⁷⁴ Burr, 'A Brief History of U.S.-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations'.

policy development that is cooperative and progressive towards the resolution of conflict. The Nixon Center, together with the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces, have organised track II sessions with Iran in Geneva. All these organisations focus in some way on track II diplomacy and have conducted research on both the United States and Iran. Also, the Gulf/2000 project of Columbia University was created to collect a large quantity of information on the eight countries of the Persian Gulf region, among whom is Iran, and provide the public with a broad selection of useful materials. Also, the International Atomic Energy Agency provides reports and studies into multiple nuclear related topics. Furthermore, nukewatch.org, the World Nuclear Association, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Wikileaks, the National Security Archive, the Nuclear Weapons Archive and the Nuclear Vault all contain a wide variety of source and study material to be used in this thesis, primarily when researching the influence of track II nuclear diplomacy.

Chapter 3

US and Iran in the First Cold War

This chapter will analyse the development of the nuclear relationship between the United States and Iran during the first Cold War. This will be done by analysing their relation in the context of the wider Cold War, the first nuclear efforts between the countries, the role of the United States and international organisations in aiding Iran's nuclear efforts.

During the early Cold War, Iran proved to be a valuable ally to the United States in the greater Middle East. Due to its role as a significant exporter of oil and its geostrategic location, it was crucial for the US that Iran did not fall under Soviet orbit. According to the logic of the time, Mossadegh needed to be removed to prevent a communist take-over in Iran, not because he was a communist or supported communist ideas, but because Mossadegh would plunge Iran in such a chaos that communist influences could no longer be prevented.⁷⁵ The US-backed 1953 coup served that scope and favoured the instauration of a pro-Western elite, culture, and ideology in Iran. The net result, for the US, was the establishment, in the Middle East, of the formation of the so-called 'twin pillars' – a strong alliance with both Iran and Saudi Arabia.⁷⁶ The United States was quick to notice the important role that Iran could play in the region and therefore pushed for modernisation in the country that would lead to more stability.⁷⁷ After the United States, with the cooperation of the United Kingdom, successfully managed to remove the elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953 and replaced him with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran became a fundamental ally for the United States in the region.⁷⁸ However, Iran's clergy and religious authorities found these efforts to modernise the country threatening to their traditional role in society, especially regarding legislation that equalised the role of women and minorities, which they argued was corrupting the Islamic lifestyle of the country.⁷⁹ These efforts of social and economic Westernisation of Iranian society in 1963 were termed the 'White Revolution' and mounting criticism eventually led to the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini, who will play a crucial role

⁷⁵ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 17.

⁷⁶ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 5.

⁷⁷ David W. Lesch, Mark L. Haas, and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies* (Routledge, 2018), 238.

⁷⁸ Saira Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, Routledge global security studies (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 47.

⁷⁹ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 5.

later on in Iranian history.⁸⁰ Although the development of Iran's nuclear capabilities was of personal interest to the Shah, the growing relationship with the United States proved crucial in paving the way towards the development of the country's nuclear programme.⁸¹ In 1963, anti-nuclear movements rose in the United States as a consequence of the Cuban missile crisis during which a nuclear war seemed close.⁸² The following diplomatic nuclear talks resulted in the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which halted nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, underwater and in outer space and promised extra arms-limitation negotiations.⁸³

At the onset of the Cold-War, the United States deemed it useful and necessary to engage cooperatively with anti-communist regimes in Asia and the Middle East and even planned to overthrow left-wing anti-US regimes.⁸⁴ The presidency of Eisenhower was of particular importance to the Middle East where Washington sought to counter the influence of communism and aligned itself with Muslim-majority governments that also resisted communist influences.⁸⁵ However, Iran hoped, by joining the pro-Western Baghdad pact – or Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) – in 1955, that the commitment of the United States to defend Iran would be stronger in a time in which Iran feared Soviet aggression and needed strong – US – military assistance, after what had happened in the 1946 Azerbaijan crisis and the coup in 1953.⁸⁶ However, due to other foreign policy objectives related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States did not join the pact.⁸⁷ This left Iran without security guarantees and resulted in secret talks between the Shah and Moscow to broker a non-aggression pact that would result in a reduction of the Soviet threat and reduce Iran's reliance on the United States.⁸⁸ After mounting American and English pressures, the Soviet-Iranian talks collapsed and Iran signed a defense agreement with the United States.⁸⁹ This moment, however, had a lasting effect on their relationship in which the Shah felt that he was treated by Washington as “a concubine and not as a wife,”

⁸⁰ Gretchen Frazee, “A Timeline of U.S.-Iran Relations”, PBS NewsHour, 13 January 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/a-timeline-of-u-s-iran-relations>.

⁸¹ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 47.

⁸² Paul S. Boyer, *American History: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP USA, 2012), 111.

⁸³ Boyer, *American History: A Very Short Introduction*, 111.

⁸⁴ Boyer, 109.

⁸⁵ Raymond Tanter, *President Obama and Iran: Engagement, Isolation, Regime Change* (Washington, D.C.: Iran Policy Committee, 2010), 4.

⁸⁶ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 19.

⁸⁷ Alvandi, 19.

⁸⁸ Alvandi, 19.

⁸⁹ Alvandi, 19-21.

according to a British official, while simultaneously Eisenhower's administration began to doubt the stability of the Shah's regime.⁹⁰ The prototype of Track II diplomacy was born under president Eisenhower when an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet airspace and Norman Cousins, a friend of Eisenhower and editor of the *Saturday Review*, called together an unofficial delegation of both American and Soviet academics and ex-officials to discuss their countries' opposing perspectives and how to resolve these.⁹¹

Through the use of the Atoms for Peace programme – a programme founded by president Eisenhower that provided technology and educational materials for states that wanted to develop nuclear programmes for civilian use – the United States provided the necessary nuclear research facilities and training to various Cold War allies, one of which was Iran, in exchange for promises that the programme would not be used for the development of nuclear weapons.⁹² Atoms for Peace was hailed widely as an incredibly promising programme that could, when upheld by all, lead to the peaceful use of nuclear materials and technologies.⁹³ Eisenhower's policy was meant to create a military alliance which would be able to contain the Soviet Union and China by creating a so-called 'nuclear umbrella' and providing its participants access to American aid.⁹⁴ Iran committed to the agreement and in 1957 signed the nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States that led to the construction of five-megawatt research reactors and laboratories for the Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC) in 1967.⁹⁵ The Iranian people hoped that the liberal President Kennedy, who was elected in 1961, would be critical of the Shah's autocratic way of rule and therefore a supporter of constructive reform.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, an intelligence report from March 1961 shows that Kennedy, after considering multiple options for its policy towards Iran, decided to support the Shah and focus his efforts on demanding reforms

⁹⁰ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 21.

⁹¹ Charles Homans, 'Track II Diplomacy: A Short History', *Foreign Policy* (blog), 20 June 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/track-ii-diplomacy-a-short-history/>.

⁹² Ariana Rowberry, "Sixty Years of 'Atoms for Peace' and Iran's Nuclear Program", *Brookings* (blog), 18 December 2013, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/12/18/sixty-years-of-atoms-for-peace-and-irans-nuclear-program/>; Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 47.

⁹³ Richard Greening Hewlett, Richard G. Hewlett, and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953-1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission* (University of California Press, 1989), 209–13.

⁹⁴ Steven W. Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, 5de pr. (California: CQ Press, 2015), 101.

⁹⁵ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 47.; Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "Iran's Nuclear Program and the Future of US-Iranian Relations", *Middle East Policy* 16, nr. 1 (2009): 122.

⁹⁶ Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making Of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy To Islamic Republic, Second Edition* (Routledge, 2018), 43–44.

of the country.⁹⁷ President Carter would later continue with Eisenhower's line of policy of containment at the expense of democratic values.⁹⁸ Eisenhower had favoured regional stability at the cost of democracy.⁹⁹ Carter said that 'our commitment to human rights must be absolute' and proclaimed himself to be free of the 'inordinate fear of communism' and vowed to stay clear of regimes that functioned as anti-Communist bulwarks.¹⁰⁰ Whereas Carter was initially keen to increase the role of human rights in Washington's approach to Iran, when discovering a Soviet plot to invade Iran, the president moved back towards anti-communist rhetoric and urged the Shah to reiterate the importance of deterring Soviet influences and reeled back on the human rights approach.¹⁰¹ Since signing the agreement in 1957, the Iranian nuclear programme proved ambitious and the two countries engaged in nuclear diplomacy on numerous occasions, predominantly in the 1970s.

The initial nuclear relationship between the United States and Iran thus proved fruitful. The US saw Iran as a protector of its own regional interests, predominantly in countering communist influences, and likewise attributed nuclear technologies and materials to Cold War ally Iran.

⁹⁷ Milani, *The Making Of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy To Islamic Republic*, 44.

⁹⁸ Tanter, *President Obama and Iran*, 6.

⁹⁹ Tanter, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Tanter, *President Obama and Iran*, 6.

Chapter 4

The Development of US-Iranian Nuclear Relations in the 1970s

A visit to Tehran by President Nixon and his national security advisor Henry Kissinger in 1972 resulted in sealing the status of the relationship between Washington and Tehran.¹⁰² This chapter analyses the development of the US-Iranian nuclear relations in the 1970s.

During this meeting in 1972, a deal was concluded that would guarantee the Shah access to the most crucial nonnuclear technology available to the arsenal of the United States military.¹⁰³ This sharing of non-nuclear technology was done predominantly to ensure Iran's role as the protectorate of America's interests in the Middle East, such as the crushing of the Marxist uprising in Dhofar and support in other American political and military operations in the Middle East, Africa and Vietnam, while the United States in return reduced its intelligence operations in regards to the internal politics of Iran.¹⁰⁴ As the United States under president Nixon relied on the Shah to maintain stability in the region and protect American interests, Kissinger recollected that Nixon 'asked the Shah to understand the purpose of American policy, "Protect me," he said'.¹⁰⁵ This was in line with the new, so-called 'Nixon Doctrine,' foreign policy focused on the long-term support of American allies.¹⁰⁶ The deal made in 1972 to share non-nuclear technology altered the relationship between Iran and the US and changed Iran from a client towards a powerful regional actor that could gain a stronger foothold in the region and be powerful enough to protect American interests as well.¹⁰⁷ After that, and as a result of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, oil prices soared, resulting in an influx of investments in the development of the nuclear energy sector.¹⁰⁸ The meeting in Tehran proved to be a turning point in US policy in the Persian Gulf that benefited Iran greatly, as Nixon had made far-reaching commitments to the Shah that demonstrated America's objectives for the region.¹⁰⁹ However, in 1973 the Shah was described by someone at the US embassy in Tehran as a 'close and good friend of the US and an enlightened,

¹⁰² Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 238.

¹⁰³ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, 238–39.

¹⁰⁴ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 63.

¹⁰⁶ Alvandi, 63.

¹⁰⁷ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 239.

¹⁰⁸ Özcan and Özdamar, "Iran's Nuclear Program and the Future of US-Iranian Relations", 122.

¹⁰⁹ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 63.

successful and confident Chief of State.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, many in Washington objected the policy of handing the Shah a blank cheque to acquire conventional arms sales for Iran.¹¹¹

America's activities in the Middle East grew as a peace-deal between Israel and Egypt – the Camp David Accords – were brokered in 1978 and the United States under president Nixon moved closer to Israel and supported it economically and militarily.¹¹² Furthermore, the Shah now also supplied Israel with oil and shared intelligence.¹¹³ Although Nixon and Kissinger's attempt to broker a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians failed, Nixon managed to establish the base of future diplomatic relations with China and Kissinger sought to establish better US-Soviet relations.¹¹⁴ This indicates to some extent that from the 1970s onwards, the strategical choice to partner with Iran to counter communist influences in the region did not suffice as the only explanation for their relation anymore. Iran managed to close deals with French and German contractors, who respectively agreed to build 900 and 1,200-megawatt nuclear reactors in 1974.¹¹⁵ The chairman of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation (AEOI), Akbar Etemad, travelled with the Shah to Paris in that year to close a preliminary deal that would see the delivery five-1,000 megawatt reactors along with uranium and a nuclear research facility to Iran.¹¹⁶ The two companies – Germany's Kraftwerk Union (KWU) and France's Framatome – installed the reactors at Bushehr and Bandar Abbas respectively and the French company operated under license of Westinghouse, an American corporation.¹¹⁷ The United States attempted to dissuade France and Germany from this deal later in the 1970s due to mounting fears that Iran might have more sinister purposes for its nuclear technology.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Monica L. Belmonte and Edward C. Keefer, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1973-1976*, vol. XXVII, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 64.

¹¹¹ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 63–64.

¹¹² Boyer, *American History*, 129.; Nigel J. Ashton, *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers 1967-73* (Routledge, 2007), 35.

¹¹³ Ginay Hughes, 'The Fall of the Shah: U.S. Bureaucracies' Blind Eye for Revolution' (National Defense University - National War College, 1995), 1, National War College, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a440773.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Boyer, *American History*, 127.

¹¹⁵ Jahanpour, "Oxford Research Group - Chronology of Iran's Nuclear Programme", 28 July 2007, https://web.archive.org/web/20070728234400/http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/work/middle_east/iranchronology.php.

¹¹⁶ Jahanpour.

¹¹⁷ Jahanpour..

¹¹⁸ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 49.

Informally, and outside of governmental channels, the US was still supporting Iran's nuclear programme. The prestigious American Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) signed a deal with the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran in 1975 in which was agreed that the Institute would train the first wave of Iranian nuclear scientists.¹¹⁹ The budget of the organisation rose from \$31 million to \$1 billion in 1976 in part due to the importance of having Iranians trained to become professional nuclear engineers in the United States.¹²⁰ The AEOI was created by the Shah in 1974 with the goal of generating 23,000 megawatts of nuclear energy over the next twenty years along with the construction of 23 nuclear power plants and the creation of a full nuclear fuel cycle.¹²¹ The AEOI was created in order to control and monitor Iran's nuclear energy operations.¹²² This further indicated the close relation during the 1970s between the two governments and their willingness to enhance cooperation in a multitude of fields. That the United States and Iran were in the process of discussing peaceful forms of nuclear cooperation became clear through the analysis of multiple documents.

A National Security Study memorandum from March 1975, sent by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to his deputy, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) Fred Iklé and the Administrator of the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) Robert Seamans, discussed a study to be done, directed by President Gerald Ford, to conclude whether or not the United States should allow nuclear commerce with Iran.¹²³ This exchange would include the sale of US nuclear reactors and materials to Iran, Iranian investment in US enrichment facilities and the possibility of further future nuclear transactions.¹²⁴ The study should, according to the President, be focused on assessing the rationale of such decision, an assessment of the impact on the position of the United States on Iran's nuclear development, effects on the already existing non-proliferation policies, the relation between the countries in the field of nuclear trade, as well as other forms of cooperation and the possibility of Congressional support for such Atomic Energy Agreement.¹²⁵ In the follow-up to the conclusions of this study, which came in the form of a memorandum on

¹¹⁹ Özcan and Özdamar, *Iran's Nuclear Program and the Future of US-Iranian Relations*, 122.

¹²⁰ Rowberry, 'Sixty Years of "Atoms for Peace" and Iran's Nuclear Program'.

¹²¹ Kelsey Davenport, "Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran", Arms Control Association, March 2020, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran>.

¹²² Rowberry, 'Sixty Years of "Atoms for Peace" and Iran's Nuclear Program'.

¹²³ Monica L. Belmonte and Edward C. Keefer, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1973-1976*, vol. XXVII, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 332.

¹²⁴ Belmonte and Keefer, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1973-1976* XXVII, 332.

¹²⁵ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:332.

April 22nd 1975, the President of the United States concluded that in the negotiations leading to the agreement on Cooperation in the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy with the Government of Iran, the US would allow Iran to transform American materials into fuel to be used in its own nuclear reactors as well as increasing the fuel ceiling for this purpose, so that it would reflect the approximate number of nuclear reactors that Iran was planning to purchase from American suppliers.¹²⁶ Just three days after this memorandum, then Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger stated that the Department of Defense was afraid that such a deal could have serious national security implications for the future due to the potential for instability and uncertainty in the political sphere of many Middle Eastern countries.¹²⁷ He advised thereafter to delay as long as possible any operation of nuclear fuel reprocessing facilities, as they could lead to the stockpiling of plutonium in ‘sensitive areas of the world’, as the Middle East.¹²⁸

In 1975, the Shah indicated his eagerness to discuss the terms to which Iran would have to hold itself in order to purchase nuclear reactors in the United States.¹²⁹ The Shah indicated that the terms of how to proceed the nuclear relationship between Iran and the United States were unclear and he expressed a feeling of confusion, because Iran had already committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.¹³⁰ Furthermore, a Department of State briefing paper from May 1st 1975 for a US delegation meeting with the Shah discussed that very same event. In a later confidential briefing, the Department of State laid out its stance towards nuclear cooperation with Iran. According to the document, Iran had indicated that it was willing to purchase up to eight US nuclear power reactors with an estimated revenue of \$6,4 billion for the United States and an additional \$1 billion to be invested by the Iranians in a private uranium-enrichment facility in the United States.¹³¹ The United States furthermore proved keen to allow Iran to process American nuclear materials in its facilities as long as long as satisfactory safeguarding assurances were given.¹³² At the time, Iran expressed its willingness to cooperate on a multinational level to establish international cooperation in regards to nuclear activities with the United States and other suppliers of nuclear materials, which would be reprocessed in Iranian facilities.¹³³

¹²⁶ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:335.

¹²⁷ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:336–37.

¹²⁸ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:336–37.

¹²⁹ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:333.

¹³⁰ Belmonte and Keefer, XXVII:333.

¹³¹ DOS Briefing Paper for U.S. Visit of Shah of Iran: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation (United States: Department Of State, May 1975), 1, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349001866/USDD?u=roosesc&sid=USDD&xid=ed88e679>.

¹³² DOS Briefing Paper for U.S. Visit of Shah of Iran: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation, 1.

¹³³ DOS Briefing Paper for U.S. Visit of Shah of Iran: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation, 2.

Interestingly, the Department of State was, although positive towards the prospect of Iranian investments in its nuclear energy sector and successful in reaching an Agreement for Nuclear Cooperation with Iran, also concerned over whether Congress would approve of such deal.¹³⁴

In April of 1976, two American representatives visited the Shah to discuss how to continue further nuclear negotiations between the two countries. Dr. Seamans, who in 1974 was named the first administrator of the Energy Research and Development Administration by President Gerald Ford, which was a new body that together with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission replaced the Atomic Energy Commission, and Carlyle Maw, then Undersecretary of State, travelled to Iran to meet the Shah in order to investigate possible next steps in the nuclear relationship between Iran and the United States.¹³⁵ A memo was directed at Mr. Brent Scowcroft, then the United States National Security Advisor under President Ford, which informed him that the characteristics depicted by the two American representatives of Iran's nuclear programme were important, balanced and useful in order to construct future options on how to move forward in this developing nuclear relation.¹³⁶ National Security Decision Memorandum 324 by Scowcroft from April 1976 discussed the findings of Dr. Seamans and laid-out the negotiation position of the United States vis-à-vis a nuclear agreement with Iran.¹³⁷ In it is stated that the United States' stance should be to seek political commitments from Iran to continue its nuclear energy sector in a multilateral or bilateral manner which could ensure non-proliferation efforts in the region as other regional powers – i.e. Pakistan – were given the chance to participate in a multinational reprocessing facility as opposed to a national one.¹³⁸ Also, should the Iranian nuclear facility prove unsuccessful, the United States would retain the opportunity to regain the plutonium that was used in reactors, or fuel supplied by the US, by using a buy-back or fuel exchange mechanism.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ DOS Briefing Paper for U.S. Visit of Shah of Iran: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation, 2.

¹³⁵ "Carlyle E. Maw, 84, State Dept. Legal Aide", *The New York Times*, 4 December 1987, sec. Obituaries, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/04/obituaries/carlyle-e-maw-84-state-dept-legal-aide.html>; Dennis Hevesi, "R. C. Seamans Jr., NASA Figure, Dies at 89", *The New York Times*, 3 July 2008, sec. Science, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/science/space/03seamans.html>; *Memorandum for Mr. Brent Scowcroft: Next Steps in Our Nuclear Negotiations* (United States: Department Of State, 1976), 1, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349646304/USDD?u=roosesc&sid=USDD&xid=b7b773b7>.

¹³⁶ *Memorandum for Mr. Brent Scowcroft: Next Steps in Our Nuclear Negotiations*, 1.

¹³⁷ Brent Scowcroft, "National Security Decision Memorandums (NSDM) [Ford Administration, 1974-77]" (National Security Council, 20 April 1976), 1–2, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdm-ford/index.html>.

¹³⁸ Scowcroft, 1–2.

¹³⁹ Scowcroft, 1–2.

An intelligence report from 1977 on political perspectives regarding key global issues that also discussed non-proliferation argued that Iran's quest towards becoming a nuclear armed power had to do with its status as a Least Developed Country (LDC).¹⁴⁰ As Iran demanded more control over international arrangements and grew dissatisfied with the state of geopolitics at the time, it attempted to increase its own regional and global stature by using the prestige that an actual or potential future nuclear status could give.¹⁴¹ Iranian diplomacy became occupied with disposing itself of Western demands in regards to its nuclear programme and emphasised the projection of its own power.¹⁴²

Although the relationship between the United States and Iran between 1953 and 1979 was often perceived as friendly and close, the United States' main strategic purpose for the advancement of the nuclear relations and nuclear diplomacy was to create a buffer against the influence of the Soviet Union and to function as an American tool to be used to achieve American strategic interests in the Persian Gulf region.¹⁴³ That this relationship was, next to cooperative, also sometimes troubled becomes clear as other regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, enjoyed formal partnerships with the United States whereas Iran never signed a formal treaty of alliance.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, the financial aid given to other American allies, such as India, was far greater than what Iran received when it needed help.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Chris Tudda and Adam M. Howard, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980", *Foreign Relations of the United States, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*, Volume XXVI (2015): 813.

¹⁴¹ Tudda and Howard, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980," 813.

¹⁴² Bernd Kaussler, *Iran's Nuclear Diplomacy: Power Politics and Conflict Resolution* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

¹⁴³ Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order* (California: Praeger, 2010), 35.

¹⁴⁴ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order*, 35.

¹⁴⁵ Hunter, 35.

Chapter 5

From Cooperation to Obstinacy

This chapter analysis the role of international treaties and organisations in Iran's nuclear development prior to the Islamic Revolution as well as the slowly decreasing trust in Iran's nuclear intentions.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) from 1968 is the leading international agreement that aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and subsequent technologies and to promote the cooperation of countries in utilising nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only and strive towards the total disarmament of nuclear arsenals.¹⁴⁶ Iran became signatory to this treaty in 1968 and ratified it in 1970.¹⁴⁷ Iran was one of the original signatories to the agreement.¹⁴⁸ Part of the non-proliferation treaty, as stated in Article III, is that all non-nuclear weapon states that adhere to the agreement accept extensive International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards.¹⁴⁹ In 1974, Iran agreed to uphold all safeguard agreements with the International Atomic Energy Association and agreed to allow their inspectors to visit all official nuclear sites.¹⁵⁰ The agreement between Iran and the IAEA specifically highlight the importance of utilising nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only and to prevent those energies from being diverted towards their use in nuclear weapons or any other kind of nuclear explosive devices.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, and important for the verification process, the IAEA, in accordance with the agreement, reserved the judiciary right to initiate inspections to guarantee the absence of any misuse.¹⁵² Were Iran to disregard these obligations and object to

¹⁴⁶ "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – UNODA", consulted on 14 March 2020, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text/>.

¹⁴⁷ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 47–48.

¹⁴⁸ François Carrel-Billiard and Christine Wing, "Nuclear Energy, Non-proliferation, and Disarmament: Briefing Notes for the 2010 NPT Review Conference", April 2010, 33.

¹⁴⁹ Paul K Kerr, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations", Congressional Research Service, 12 March 2020, 1.

¹⁵⁰ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 48.

¹⁵¹ "The Text of the Agreement Between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (International Atomic Energy Agency, 13 December 1974), 1, <https://www.iaea.org/publications/documents/infcircs/text-agreement-between-iran-and-agency-application-safeguards-connection-treaty-non-proliferation-nuclear-weapons>.

¹⁵² "The Text of the Agreement Between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", 3–4.

inspections, the board of the IAEA would take ‘appropriate’ action.¹⁵³ However, the IAEA admitted that the tools to appropriately monitor and verify the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities were limited.¹⁵⁴

A study conducted by the Hudson Institute Inc. for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency highlights the cooperative relationship that existed between the United States and Iran in the field of nuclear cooperation, in spite of the NPT. Iran was highly dependent on foreign inputs of nuclear materials to be reprocessed in Iranian facilities. Therefore, the study argued, should Iran violate any of its obligations towards the NPT and IAEA safeguard agreements, this should lead to the total termination of future foreign inputs in Iran’s nuclear energy sector.¹⁵⁵ The study also put forward the possibility that Iran could decide to become a nuclear weapons state and produced a range of factors that might lead to this in the mid-80s.¹⁵⁶ Among the different factors that might lead Iran towards developing its own nuclear arsenal were: direct conflict between Pakistan and India, fears of an aggressive Soviet Union, Iran’s quest to be recognised as ‘the fifth great power,’ a decision by Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons, Iranian desire to achieve political and military hegemony in the Persian Gulf and lastly a weakened constraint on foreign dependence.¹⁵⁷ This is in line with what the Shah said in 1974: ‘Iran is not thinking of acquiring nuclear weapons. But if the small states equip themselves with such armaments, then Iran would revise its policy.’¹⁵⁸ Although the Non-Proliferation Treaty does allow for nonnuclear signatories to the treaty, such as Iran, to have access to civilian nuclear power generation technologies, it does highlight the importance that such access rests on the condition that these countries do not attempt to exploit these technologies for military purposes.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ ‘The Text of the Agreement Between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons’, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Kerr, ‘Iran’s Nuclear Program: Tehran’s Compliance with International Obligations’, 6.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis A. Dunn, *Text of a Study by Hudson Institute, Inc. Analyst Lewis Dunn as Prepared for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) Entitled: Briefing Notes - Iran and Nuclear Weapons. This Document Outlines Considerations That Might Influence an Iranian Decision to Develop a Weapons Capability. Also Included Is a Chart, Which Exemplifies the Proliferation Chain Approach by Showing Possible Timelines for National Nuclear Decisions Influenced by Government of India’s Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) Program* (United States: Department Of State, 1975), 2,

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349646295/USDD?u=roosesc&sid=zotero&xid=8ffd73a8>.

¹⁵⁶ Dunn, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Dunn, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, 1.

¹⁵⁹ Jacquelyn K. Davis and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr., *Anticipating a Nuclear Iran: Challenges for U.S. Security* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 5.

Even though the Shah had proven a useful ally, the United States became increasingly suspicious of Iran's nuclear weapons programme and argued that it might work towards more than just peaceful purposes.¹⁶⁰ As of 1975, the United States became dubious of the potential dual use Iran aspired from its nuclear energy sector, since Iran had acquired nuclear fuel cycle applications for both civilian as military purposes by this time.¹⁶¹ The US and Iran did not agree on where Iran's plutonium would be reprocessed, as Iran wanted that to be done in Tehran and such moves concerned Washington.¹⁶² Iran became more actively involved in nuclear technology as it received \$700 million worth of yellowcake – a type of uranium powder formed in the uranium processing cycle – from South-Africa in 1976, in exchange for Iranian investments in an enrichment plant.¹⁶³ It furthermore purchased an experimental laser system suited for uranium enrichment from an American company called Lischem, demonstrating a willingness to make more investments in this area of nuclear technology.¹⁶⁴ A further indication of America's decreasing trust in Iran's intentions becomes clear as the US received intelligence that the Shah was working on a clandestine nuclear programme in the late 1970s, and in 1976, as talks of nuclear cooperation were suspended due to disagreement on nuclear safeguard implementations, as Iran intended to dismiss safeguards related to its own nuclear programme.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, as Carter travelled to Tehran in December of 1977, he called Iran 'an Island of stability in one of the more troubles areas of the world.'¹⁶⁶ Not knowing, however, that Iran by this time was already spiralling towards revolution.¹⁶⁷ By December 1978, Carter started to publicly distance himself from the Shah by contemplating the Shah's future and that it was in the hands of the Iranian people whether or not the Shah would survive.¹⁶⁸ Multiple US administrations acted on this suspicion of Iran's clandestine nuclear operations. In 1975, the United States vetoed Iran's wish to reprocess American supplied nuclear power fuel and later, in 1977, the United States refused

¹⁶⁰ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 48.

¹⁶¹ Khan, 48.

¹⁶² Khan, 48.

¹⁶³ Khan, 48.

¹⁶⁴ Khan, 48.

¹⁶⁵ Khan, 48.

¹⁶⁶ Donette Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations since the Islamic Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 13.

¹⁶⁷ Murray, 20.

¹⁶⁸ George L. Simpson, "Seeking Gandhi, finding Khomeini: How America failed to understand the nature of the religious opposition of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in the Iranian Revolution", *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 8, nr. 3 (3 July 2017): 247, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2017.1368825>.

nuclear assistance to Iran and urged the country to accept extensive IAEA safeguards as a prerequisite for future Iranian nuclear exports.¹⁶⁹ However, by 1978, these disagreements were overcome and a nuclear pact was agreed upon in which American concerns and the Shah's interests in nuclear reactors were met but which included restrictions on Iran's ability to produce plutonium as well as any other nuclear weapons fuel in which American supplied material were used without the green-light from Washington.¹⁷⁰ By this time, Iran was on its way to become the world's fifth most advanced military power.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, Iranian nuclear non-proliferation was not something that was discussed during the 1970s, as the nuclear cooperation between the United States and Iran was just a 'commercial transaction,' according to Henry Kissinger.¹⁷²

The feeling of resentment grew on the side of the Iranian population, as the sentiment intensified that the United States supported the repressive Pahlavi regime in Iran as well as the perceived exploitation of Iran for America's Cold War strategic agenda of countering the Soviet Union.¹⁷³ Even though Iran did not sign any official alliance with the US, it was nonetheless considered a stable and important regional ally going so far that the US trust them with their nuclear technology. Whereas the US-Iran nuclear relationship can be characterised as a patron-client relationship in the early years of the nuclear development in Iran, towards the end of the 1970s, when tensions and distrust increased, that relationship changed.

¹⁶⁹ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 49.

¹⁷⁰ William Burr, "The Nuclear Vault: The Iranian Nuclear Program, 1974-1978", The National Security Archive, 13 January 2009, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb268/>.

¹⁷¹ Stephen McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies Towards the Shah's Iran* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

¹⁷² William Burr, "The Nuclear Vault: The Iranian Nuclear Program, 1974-1978", The National Security Archive, 13 January 2009, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb268/>.

¹⁷³ Victor A. Utgoff, *The Coming Crisis: Nuclear Proliferation, U.S. Interests, and World Order* (MIT Press, 2000), 96.

Chapter 6

The Revolution and the New US-Iran Relationship

‘Marg bar Shah!’

A chant used by religious students during the protests in Qom in 1978, prior to the revolution, meaning ‘Death to the Shah.’¹⁷⁴

This chapter seeks to analyse the influence of Iran’s Islamic Revolution on the nuclear relationship with the United States and America’s failure to adequately predict this massive alteration in regional geopolitics and the influence on American foreign policy.

Tehran in the 1970s was a modern-looking city of concrete, with few older buildings still standing.¹⁷⁵ The streets were filled with American cars, shops and other Western influences but the presence of old and more traditional Iranian society lingered under the surface.¹⁷⁶ Admiration for Western influences and craving for economic development collided with a tension and dislike for that very presence that many Iranians experienced.¹⁷⁷ During the 1970s, many in Washington and other Western capitals believed that the fast modernisation and changes in the socioeconomic landscape of Iran would keep it from falling victim to internal disputes.¹⁷⁸ The mutually beneficial relationship that had existed between the United States and Iran up until the end of the 1970s proved to be fragile, as the United States relied on the Shah to remain in power and lacked any functional alternative policy should that no longer be the case.¹⁷⁹ There was no alternative policy because, since any negative effects of the relationship would only become clear if the Shah failed, Washington ignored warning signs and refused to take potential difficulties seriously.¹⁸⁰ In the mid-1970s, the Shah was urged to reinstate democratic policies to close the widening gap between the Iranian people and the governing elite, but the Shah decided to reinforce his autocratic rule even further by abolishing the two existing parties in the Majles – Iran’s legislative body – Mardom and Iran Novin and replaced them with the new Rastakhiz (Resurgence) party.¹⁸¹ The previously expelled cleric Khomeini rose in popularity and power partly due to the policies of political repression, the widespread presence of Iran’s secret policy

¹⁷⁴ Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 102.

¹⁷⁵ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, 78.

¹⁷⁶ Axworthy, 78.

¹⁷⁷ Axworthy, 78.

¹⁷⁸ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 6.

¹⁷⁹ Murray, 6.

¹⁸⁰ Murray, 7.

¹⁸¹ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, 89.

and intelligence service – SAVAK –, the silencing of journalists, the failure of the Shah to provide meaningful national institutionalised policies, corruption in the regime and the Shah's dependence on the United States.¹⁸² Economic mismanagement throughout the 1970s added to the resentment of many Iranians towards the regime and fuelled the growing unrest.¹⁸³ The death of Khomeini's son, Sayyid Mustafa, in November 1977 fuelled growing unrest in the religious society as many questioned the suspicious circumstances of his death.¹⁸⁴ When, in the following January of 1978, Khomeini was stigmatised as the son of a foreign trader and a secret agent of colonial powers in an article in the Tehran based newspaper *Ettela'at*, violent protests erupted in the cities of Qum and Tabriz and resulted in the widespread protests and mobilisation of the young, religiously educated youth, spurred on by the Iranian clergy.¹⁸⁵ By the end of 1978, Khomeini announced the formation of an Islamic Republic in Iran from his home in Paris.¹⁸⁶ The demonstrations culminated in Ashura in December of 1978 and shortly after the regime started to break down.¹⁸⁷ Some parts of the military turned their back to the Shah and the prime minister, Shahpour Bakhtiar, who was appointed by the Shah to gain the support of the more modern middle class Iranians, demanded, in a move that reflected public opinion, that the Shah leave the country.¹⁸⁸ This move resulted in the return of Khomeini to Iran in February 1979, which was followed by the annexation of the government institutions by Khomeini's followers and led to the arrests and executions of army officers, suspected members of SAVAK and members of the regime of the Shah.¹⁸⁹ The march on the 7th of September became known as 'Black Friday' and resulted in hundreds of deaths among Iranian citizens as soldiers fired into the protesting crowd, who chanted their newest slogan that called for the establishment of an Islamic Republic.¹⁹⁰

The US ambassador in Iran hoped that urging the Shah to leave Iran was in the best interest of himself as well as that of the country and by arranging his departure, the United States might gain a favourable position with the Ayatollah.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, Washington officials were

¹⁸² Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003), 147.

¹⁸³ Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*, 149.

¹⁸⁴ Martin, 149.

¹⁸⁵ Martin, 149.

¹⁸⁶ Milani, *The Making Of Iran's Islamic Revolution*, 12.

¹⁸⁷ Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, 149.

¹⁸⁸ Martin, 149.

¹⁸⁹ Martin, 149.

¹⁹⁰ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, 113.

¹⁹¹ Simpson, 'Seeking Gandhi, finding Khomeini', 248.

conflicted in how to deal with the unfolding situation in Iran. Carter, witnessing the escalating revolution, had to make a choice between continuing his support for a falling Shah by encouraging him to repress the opposition and use a full military crackdown, or find ways of dealing with a new emerging regime.¹⁹² As the regime of the Shah fell, the Twin Pillar policy that the United States had sustained until then fell apart.¹⁹³ The policy had been structured around a close relationship with the Shah, but the arrival of an openly hostile Islamist regime in Tehran left the United States vulnerable in the Persian Gulf region.¹⁹⁴ The close relation that the United States had maintained with the Shah came to haunt them after the revolution, as the Iranian people remembered how the US had supported the authoritarian ruler of their country at the cost of Iran's domestic issues and democratic values.¹⁹⁵ The aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 altered the relationship between the two countries. This would eventually lead to the degeneration of nuclear diplomacy and a severance of the cooperative ties that had been built between the United States and Iran in regard to nuclear cooperation, as move Iran closer towards America's foes.

US officials believed that Washington would either come to deal with the new regime, or that this new regime would soon collapse and business would go back to how it was before.¹⁹⁶ Critique of America's intelligence agencies mounted as they were accused of failing to adequately foresee possible crises around the world and in Iran.¹⁹⁷ America's willingness to engage openly with an authoritarian leader who had demanded that the US limited its intelligence gathering operations in the country incited more critique.¹⁹⁸ The CIA had concluded in 1978 that 'Iran is not in a revolutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation' and added that 'those who are in opposition, both violent and non-violent, do not have the capacity to be more than troublesome.'¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, this incoherent and conflicting analysis of the situation was enhanced as the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) believed that the Shah would remain in power for the next ten years, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew

¹⁹² Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, 118.

¹⁹³ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 239.

¹⁹⁴ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, 239.

¹⁹⁵ Tanter, *President Obama and Iran*, 5.

¹⁹⁶ Malcolm Byrne, "Iran's 1979 Revolution Revisited: Failures (and a Few Successes) of U.S. Intelligence and Diplomatic Reporting", National Security Archive, consulted on 22 April 2020, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/iran/2019-02-11/irans-1979-revolution-revisited-failures-few-successes-us-intelligence-diplomatic-reporting>.

¹⁹⁷ Byrne.

¹⁹⁸ Byrne.

¹⁹⁹ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 22.

Young, declared that 'it would be impossible to have a fundamentalist Islamic State in Iran because too much Western idealism has infiltrated that movement.'²⁰⁰ But the State Department's intelligence section's Iran desk officer, Henry Precht, urged a more cautious approach towards Iran.²⁰¹ Precht argued that the Shah was not likely to survive the coming revolution and was actively opposing US policy towards Iran.²⁰² However, since Precht's stance was so different from many others, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance distanced himself from Precht's statements and limited the influence of the Iran desk in policy-making decisions at the highest level.²⁰³ Even Khomeini, the key player in the unfolding of the revolution, was unknown to policy makers in Washington and had to be identified to them by the embassy staff in 1978.²⁰⁴ As policy-makers in Washington were extensively occupied with foreign policy objectives with more priority, such as the Camp David Accords, ongoing and extensive attempts to normalise relations with China and the SALT negotiations – agreements between the Soviet Union and the United States to limit strategic nuclear delivery vehicles and to restrict the ongoing arms race in strategic ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead in general – US policy in Iran was not prioritised and therefore not revised.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the fall of the Shah represented to many policy-makers in Washington the absolute collapse of the United States' foreign policy in a part of the world that had been considered being of crucial importance to its interests.²⁰⁶ Only when US ambassador to Tehran, William Sullivan, in a cable that has since been described as one of the most important documents in the entire revolutionary period, warned US policy-makers of the Shah's diminishing popularity among Iranians, did policy-makers in Washington take the situation more seriously.²⁰⁷ Sullivan, who had been a supporter of the Shah, send a cable to secretary of state Vance, laying out the possibility of the Shah abdicating the throne and how this might not necessarily be bad for the United States.²⁰⁸ Sullivan further indicated that cooperation with the new leaders of Iran could be possible because of the anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance of Khomeini and his followers as well as the fact that most of the young officers in Iran's

²⁰⁰ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 21-22

²⁰¹ Murray, 21.; Simpson, 'Seeking Gandhi, finding Khomeini', 233.

²⁰² Hughes, 'The Fall of the Shah: U.S. Bureaucracies' Blind Eye for Revolution', 6.

²⁰³ Hughes, 6.

²⁰⁴ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 21–22.

²⁰⁵ Hughes, 'The Fall of the Shah: U.S. Bureaucracies' Blind Eye for Revolution', 2.

²⁰⁶ Hughes, 1.

²⁰⁷ William Sullivan, 'Thinking the Unthinkable', Declassified document, The National Security Archive, 9 november 1978, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//dc.html?doc=5734181-National-Security-Archive-Doc-07-U-S-Embassy>.

²⁰⁸ Sullivan, 'Thinking the Unthinkable,' 2-3.

military had been trained by the United States or Western allies.²⁰⁹ Now aware that the US might lose its close cooperation with Iran, Charles Stebbins, a staff member of the National Security Council, wrote a memorandum to president Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski, discussing conventional arms transfers to discuss how the US should fill the transfer 'gap' that would result from the loss of the Iranian market.²¹⁰ Then, on November 4th 1979, radical Iranian students stormed the US embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.²¹¹ The students engaging in hostage-taking were directed by Khomeini and refused an early settlement with the US, as they remembered that the United States had invited the Shah to their country as the revolution reached its peak, calling the United States the 'Great Satan'.²¹² In November of 1979, as the embassy was still being invaded, Carter stopped the import of Iranian oil, expelled Iranians from the United States, froze Iranian assets and sent a convoy to Iran to conduct negotiations.²¹³ In April of 1980, Carter orders all diplomatic ties with Iran to be broken and placed sanctions on all Iranian goods, with the exception of medicine and food.²¹⁴ Carter lost the Presidential race of 1980 to Ronald Reagan due to the collapse of his ratings – in large part due to his inability to negotiate with Iran – and the hostages were freed on the day of Reagan's inauguration.²¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, all regular diplomatic contact between the United States and Iran were severed.²¹⁶ Ultimately, the Algiers Accords – brokered by the Algerian government – were signed in January 1981 in which the United States promised not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and lifted sanctions in exchange for the release of the hostages.²¹⁷ Another troublesome moment was Iran's response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, which led to the creation of Hezbollah in 1982, a terrorist organisation functioning as an Iranian proxy in the region, resulted in increasing hostilities between Iran and Israel with the United States supporting the latter.²¹⁸ Hezbollah also attacked the American embassy and marine

²⁰⁹ Sullivan, 2–3.

²¹⁰ Tudda and Howard, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980", 773.

²¹¹ Elaine Kamarck, 'The Iranian Hostage Crisis and Its Effect on American Politics', *Brookings* (blog), 4 November 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/11/04/the-iranian-hostage-crisis-and-its-effect-on-american-politics/>.

²¹² Boyer, *American History*, 129.; Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 65.

²¹³ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 14.

²¹⁴ Murray, 14.

²¹⁵ Kamarck, 'The Iranian Hostage Crisis and Its Effect on American Politics'.

²¹⁶ McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies Towards the Shah's Iran*, 1.

²¹⁷ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 66.

²¹⁸ Khan, 67–68.

barracks in Beirut in 1983, increasing tensions between the US and Iran even further and resulting in President Reagan declaring Iran ‘a state sponsor of international terrorism’.²¹⁹ The Arab-Israeli conflict that had troubled the region for decades took a step in the right direction with the 1993 Oslo Accords for which the groundwork was laid in 1989 when the American Academy of Arts and Sciences hosted multiple conferences bringing Arab and Israeli participants together to argue about potential solutions towards the conflict, and thus exhibited the practical use of track II diplomacy.²²⁰

The fall of the Shah in combination with reports of an Marxist invasion of Northern Yemen, a previous Marxist coup in Afghanistan, a deal between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union in 1978, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the assassination of US Ambassador to Kabul, Adolph Dubs, in 1979, enhanced the sentiment that the United States had lost its strategic position in the Middle East and along with it its capacity to influence events in the region.²²¹ Iran, under Khomeini, also reduced its arms purchases and abandoned its role as regional security guarantor for the United States and in general dispossessing the United States of an ally that had protected its regional interests for so long.²²² Iran furthermore withdrew from CENTO in 1979, thereby depriving the US of an important link in its objective to contain the Soviet sphere of influence.²²³ That Iran would take on a different role in the region became clear as it stopped oil sells to Israel and broke all diplomatic relations with Israel and Egypt.²²⁴ It furthermore recognised the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and handed it the former Israeli embassy and stopped its support for pro-Western monarchs and sultans in the Gulf-region.²²⁵ The United States, in turn, reacted to this. Brzezinski wrote a memorandum to president Carter in 1980 on their strategy for the Middle East, in which he argued that the United States should aim to establish the long-term goal of maintaining a permanent naval presence in the Persian Gulf and

²¹⁹ Khan, 68.

²²⁰ Homans, ‘Track II Diplomacy’.

²²¹ Gary Sick, “The United States in the Persian Gulf: From Twin Pillars to Dual Containment”, in *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies*, 6th pr. (New York & London: Routledge, 2018), 240.

²²² Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ‘The Soviet Union and Iran under Khomeini’, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 57, nr. 4 (1981): 599, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2619862>.

²²³ Rubinstein, 600.

²²⁴ Rubinstein, 599.

²²⁵ Rubinstein, 599.

Indian Ocean.²²⁶ Additionally, the US should protect its Middle Eastern allies and establish a ‘more cohesive and cooperative’ relationship with Iran.²²⁷

The Islamic Revolution in Iran has led to the complete severance of diplomatic ties between the US and Iran as well as to increased economic sanctions on Iran. The deterioration of the relationship as well as the absence of official diplomatic contacts support the need for unofficial, track II, diplomatic efforts.

²²⁶ Kristin L. Ahlberg and Adam M. Howard, “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980.”, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Public Diplomacy, Volume XXX* (2016): 703–4.

²²⁷ Ahlberg and Howard, 703-4.

Chapter 7

Nuclear Diplomacy with Post-Revolutionary Iran

This chapter focuses on the development of the nuclear relation between the United States and Iran between 1979 and 2001 by looking at Iran's post-revolutionary nuclear energy sector, its move towards closer relationships with the Soviet Union, a decrease in American influence and a regional war that convinced Iran that it needed nuclear weapons to defend itself.

Iran re-started its nuclear ambitions in the 1980s and revived its science and technology efforts as well as continued its 'civilian' nuclear energy programme.²²⁸ As the regime fell, many Iranian nuclear scientists fled, and Western countries suspended their agreements with Iran and stopped their support for Iran's nuclear aspirations.²²⁹ Iran's nuclear programme came to a halt, as Ayatollah Khomeini believed that nuclear weapons went against the core values of Islam.²³⁰ Khomeini, who had ordered a fatwa against nuclear weapons, changed his mind in 1987 as pressure from Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps intensified.²³¹ Ali Khamenei, who was president between 1981 and 1989 and became the Supreme Leader after Khomeini's death, together with another influential politician, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani – who would become president after Khamenei – did not await Khomeini's approval and started exploring Iran's nuclear options.²³² Shortly after the revolution, leading figures in the new regime were eager to re-start the nuclear programme and in 1982 secret meetings were conducted with the German firm Siemens, who had started the building of the nuclear reactor at Bushehr earlier, to finish its construction.²³³ In 1982, uranium was secretly smuggled out of the Tehran Research Center, which still accommodated the American supplied five-megawatt research reactor and in 1983 the two political leaders established the Strategic Research and Nuclear Technology Unit as part of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.²³⁴ In 1985, Iran uncovered a five-year nuclear programme plan that allocated millions of dollars to various institutions.²³⁵ Furthermore, as Iran's leadership decided that it was time to restart its abandoned nuclear programme, it extended its search for available

²²⁸ Shannon N. Kile, *Europe and Iran: Perspectives on Non-Proliferation* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

²²⁹ Gawdat Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran', *Iranian Studies* 39, nr. 3 (1 september 2006): 309, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210860600808102>.

²³⁰ Bahgat, 309.

²³¹ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 78.

²³² Seliktar, 78.

²³³ Seliktar, 78.

²³⁴ Seliktar, 78.

²³⁵ Seliktar, 79.

uranium and attempted to convince the fled Iranian scientists to return home.²³⁶ The exiled scientists were invited to a conference that would take place in 1986 at Bushehr and was organised by the AEOI.²³⁷ In 1984, Tehran focused its attention on establishing a new nuclear research laboratory at the Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center (INTC) in which Chinese expertise was used for its development, leading to the creation of a ‘training reactor’ in 1985.²³⁸ In 1991, US satellites produced images of constructions on a plutonium plant – the Isfahan plant – involving a great number of Chinese technicians at work.²³⁹

One of the reasons Iran again sought to obtain non-conventional modes of warfare was its conflict with Iraq between 1980 and 1988 in which the two countries vied over regional leadership, spurred by ethnic and sectarian division and incompatible foreign policy objectives.²⁴⁰ Iraq’s adoption of chemical weapons resulted in the deaths of thousands of Iranians, who perceived the lack of international condemnation as the justification for their need to obtain nuclear weapons as a means to defend themselves.²⁴¹ Iraq had also bombed the Bushehr nuclear power plant three times between 1984 and 1985.²⁴² Furthermore, as Iran’s conflicts with Iraq and Israel urged its need to utilise non-conventional weapons, Iran’s clash with the United States, which played out as an asymmetric conflict between a regional and a global power, further enhanced its move to enhance its nuclear weapons programme.²⁴³

As a result of the Iran-Iraq war and the threat that Saddam Hussein posed with his supposed use of nuclear weapons, Iran’s nuclear programme developed further.²⁴⁴ The programme now came under the control of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps – Iran’s elite armed forces unit – and was not adopted for civil purposes.²⁴⁵ Shortly after, Pakistan’s Abdul Qadeer Khan, better known as AQ Khan, a nuclear physicist and former politician who created Pakistan’s uranium enrichment programme for their own atomic bomb, provided Iran with

²³⁶ Bahgat, ‘Nuclear proliferation’, 310.

²³⁷ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 79.

²³⁸ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 75.

²³⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?: The Uncertain Nature of Iran’s Nuclear Programs* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in ..., 2006), 25.; see appendix 1 for a map of Iran’s nuclear facilities.

²⁴⁰ Bahgat, ‘Nuclear proliferation’, 314.

²⁴¹ Bahgat, 314.

²⁴² Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 24.

²⁴³ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 63.

²⁴⁴ Kenneth Pollack, *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy* (Simon and Schuster, 2014), 45.

²⁴⁵ Pollack, 45.

technical drawings of the P-1 centrifuge, a nuclear technology for the enrichment of uranium, in 1985.²⁴⁶ Iran offered Pakistan around \$3.5 billion to share its nuclear technology and Pakistan's AQ Khan provided Iran with the second generation of Pakistani centrifuge – the P-2 – for the enrichment of uranium in 1995.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, Iran refused to sign an indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty as long as the five major nuclear powers in the world did not reduce and dismantle their own nuclear weapons and nuclear sectors.²⁴⁸ Iran did sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996, which prohibits 'any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion' no matter where in the world.²⁴⁹

Iran again sent students and nuclear engineers abroad and signed agreements with Pakistan in 1987 and China in 1990 to train Iran's nuclear personnel and provide the country with necessary technical assistance.²⁵⁰ However, as US pressure mounted, Pakistan and China both abandoned these agreements later on.²⁵¹ Since the mid-1980s, the United States, Israel and other Western allies have been critical of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons capabilities and have accused the country developing its nuclear sector for military purposes and not just for civilian ones, as Iranian officials have claimed.²⁵² Iran claimed that this did not violate the terms of the NPT, as producing enriched uranium is not illegal as long as IAEA inspectors have access to the facilities.²⁵³ Here, Iran methodically abused a weakness in the NPT, as an illegal bomb design is rather easy to hide and, since it does not yet have a nuclear payload, these two things can be manufactured separately.²⁵⁴ The IAEA estimated that a country in possession of both the bomb design and parallel nuclear materials could produce a nuclear bomb in just two weeks.²⁵⁵ The uranium that Iran imported from abroad was meticulously hidden from the IAEA inspectors and an IAEA report stated that 'all of the materials important to uranium conversion between 1981

²⁴⁶ Rowberry, 'Sixty Years of "Atoms for Peace" and Iran's Nuclear Program'.

²⁴⁷ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 46.; Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 26.

²⁴⁸ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 83.

²⁴⁹ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 29.; Daryl Kimball, "Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at a Glance", Arms Control Association, February 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/test-ban-treaty-at-a-glance>.

²⁵⁰ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2005, 2.

²⁵¹ Kile, 2.

²⁵² Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation', 307.

²⁵³ Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions* (Carlisle, PA: DIANE Publishing, 2004), 27.

²⁵⁴ Sokolski and Clawson, 27.

²⁵⁵ Sokolski and Clawson, 27.

and 1993 have been done so without having been reported to the Agency.²⁵⁶ By November 1991, and again in 1995, the AEIA's director-general, Hans Blix, still indicated that there was no cause to believe that Iran was attempting to acquire nuclear technology.²⁵⁷ This, in itself, is not surprising, as inspections at multiple Iranian nuclear facilities in 1992 and 1993 did not uncover any illegal activities.²⁵⁸

With the death of Khomeini in 1989, Ayatollah Khamenei took-over power in Tehran. Khamenei was determined to make Iran independent of foreign aid and sought to dispose Iran of foreign influences, believing that these were responsible for all the problems that the country faced.²⁵⁹ Iran under Khamenei moved closer towards an autarchic system, as the Ayatollah claimed that even the sanctions placed on Iran were a blessing, because it would force the country to function independently of outsiders.²⁶⁰ Khamenei's distrust of the international society was focused on the United States the most, as he feared that the US used soft-power tactics to erode the Iranian state. Therefore, Khamenei refused to sign any agreement with the United States, including any nuclear agreements, as he saw these as a tool to keep Iran from obtaining the necessary means to counter threats to its own survival and sovereignty.²⁶¹

After the Iranian Revolution, the United States immediately terminated its assistance to Iran under the Atoms for Peace programme, halted its civilian nuclear cooperation agreement and stopped the export of its highly enriched uranium to the country.²⁶² President Carter had pushed to limit the sale of conventional arms to US allies who did not place human rights in high regard between 1977 and 1979.²⁶³ Due to his own background as a nuclear physics engineer, Carter became involved in new actions regarding nuclear weapons, such as non-proliferation efforts and the International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation (INFCE) – which is an organisation concerned with assessing the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation from nuclear fuel cycles and mediates between disagreeing international actors on how to meet these risks.²⁶⁴ Already in 1977,

²⁵⁶ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 75.

²⁵⁷ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 26.

²⁵⁸ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, 26.

²⁵⁹ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 25.

²⁶⁰ Pollack, 25.

²⁶¹ Pollack, 25–26.

²⁶² Rowberry, ‘Sixty Years of “Atoms for Peace” and Iran’s Nuclear Program’.

²⁶³ Tudda and Howard, “Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980”, x.

²⁶⁴ R. Skjöldebrand, “The International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation - INFCE”, *IAEA Bulletin*, IAEA Bulletin, Volume 22, nr. No. 2 (April 1980): 1–4.

the Ad Hoc Interagency Group on Nuclear Proliferation conducted a study on how the United States should proceed with its efforts to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons globally to ensure the US' preparedness in case of international crises or conflict.²⁶⁵ A follow-up paper two years later, prepared by the Department of State, argued that, since the announcement that the United States would focus more intensely on non-proliferation policy, the United States achieved a better awareness of the dangers that nuclear weapons proliferation abroad could pose.²⁶⁶ Additionally it stated that progress had been made in re-negotiating multiple nuclear cooperation agreements.²⁶⁷ The United States furthermore acquired updated commitments to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and managed to gain support from other states that supplied nuclear materials to increase caution on the export of sensitive nuclear materials and technologies, in part due to the events in Iran that disrupted the global energy supply.²⁶⁸ In 1980, President Carter adopted a series of new nuclear policies, which would later function as the foundation for President Reagan's policy of expanding America's nuclear weapons capabilities.²⁶⁹ Presidential Directive 59 from July 25th 1980, argued that the US' nuclear capabilities should be able to deter nuclear attacks by foreign actors on the United States or its allies and that this strategy would lead to a deterrence of non-nuclear attacks and therefore keep the option available to negotiate acceptable terms to end a conflict or war.²⁷⁰ The nuclear cooperation that had existed between the United States and Iran prior to the revolution came to a standstill while at the same time anti-nuclear weapons activists started to organise campaigns urging the most powerful states to stop their nuclear-weapons programmes and continue disarmament negotiations.²⁷¹ Simultaneously, the fears of nuclear war were fuelled by movies and tv-programmes.²⁷² These instances already show examples of track II initiatives exerting influence on Iranian nuclear policy. Reagan proposed the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) that would create an indestructible shield against any incoming missile attacks.²⁷³ This initiative was not taken seriously by experts

²⁶⁵ Tudda and Howard, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980", 800.

²⁶⁶ Tudda and Howard, 944–45.

²⁶⁷ Tudda and Howard, 944–45.

²⁶⁸ Tudda and Howard, 944–45.

²⁶⁹ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 219.

²⁷⁰ Glad, 219.

²⁷¹ Boyer, *American History*, 130–31.

²⁷² Boyer, 130–31.

²⁷³ Boyer, 130–31.

and was later characterised as the ‘Star Wars’.²⁷⁴ Fears of an inescapable nuclear war grew among the American public and were strengthened by new scientific discoveries that even a limited form of nuclear warfare might result in a nuclear winter, ensuing the extinction of most plant and animal life.²⁷⁵

American concerns of a possible increase in Soviet influence in the Gulf region grew as Iran had long been a place in which the Russians competed with the British and Americans for influence in the region.²⁷⁶ The Revolution did not lead to an immediate Soviet intervention in Iran but rather to the collapse of American intelligence efforts in Northern Iran, the collapse of the Iranian oil production and the subsequent increase of global oil prices between 1979 and 1981.²⁷⁷ Nevertheless, American officials called for the strengthening of the ‘American Image’ and the countering of Soviet anti-US propaganda in Iran, as can be read from a memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the Department of State, Peter Tarnoff, to Brzezinski in February 1979.²⁷⁸ American officials believed that the Soviet Union attempted to make use of the chaotic situation in Iran to increase its presence there by creating anti-US sentiments.²⁷⁹ The return of Ayatollah Khomeini was met with positive sentiments in the Soviet media and Iran’s new Deputy Prime Minister, Amir Entazam, was reported saying that the relationship between Iran and the Soviet Union would be broadened and further developed, as well as stated that the bilateral relation between the two countries would become much better than it had been under the Shah’s regime.²⁸⁰ However, as the revolution continued, the Soviet Union became more alarmed at the perceived religious fanaticism and ‘official religious-theological doctrine’ that was driving the country into chaos and economic hardship.²⁸¹ The Soviet Union hoped that the Islamic Revolution would be followed by a socialist revolution and therefore did not support the governments of Bazargan – Iran’s first post-revolution Prime-Minister – and Bani-Sadr – Iran’s first post-revolution President – but supported Khomeini instead.²⁸² According to Noureddin Kianouri, then leader of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party, the period following the revolution created a

²⁷⁴ Boyer, 131.

²⁷⁵ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 106.

²⁷⁶ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 173–74.

²⁷⁷ Glad, 174.

²⁷⁸ Kristin L. Ahlberg and Adam M. Howard, ‘Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980.’, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Public Diplomacy, Volume XXX (2016): 483.

²⁷⁹ Ahlberg and Howard, 483–84.

²⁸⁰ Aryeh Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran* (Routledge, 2011), 55.

²⁸¹ Yodfat, 60.

²⁸² Shireen Hunter, *Iran’s Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order* (ABC-CLIO, 2010), 104.

schism between the revolutionary center and the more liberal facets of Iranian society.²⁸³ The Iran-Soviet relations in the 1980 oscillated between reconciliation and hostility, depending on the fortuity of the various groups within the circles of leadership.²⁸⁴

Iran was not dependent on Soviet Union's arms to survive the regional struggles of the 1980s.²⁸⁵ During this period, Iran purchased its arms indirectly from multiple states, such as North Korea, Syria, Libya and on the open market from Western sources as well.²⁸⁶ Although the Soviet Union enjoyed good relations with both Iran and Iraq during their war and attempted not to choose a side, reports suggested that, whereas Iran had previously denied Soviet arms, it accepted Soviet security assistance in mid-1981.²⁸⁷ Also, since the Revolution, there had been between 1,500 and 2,000 Soviet advisors and technicians in Iran, some of whom for military purposes.²⁸⁸ The relationship between Iran and the Soviet Union also experienced some difficulties, especially during the Iran-Iraq war in which the Soviet Union took a neutral position initially, even though being a long-time ally of Iraq.²⁸⁹ This relationship cooled as Saddam Hussein threatened Soviet client state Syria and improved relations with regional conservative Arab states.²⁹⁰ However, once the Soviet Union increased its military support for Iraq and invaded Afghanistan – a move criticised by Iran – anti-Soviet sentiment increased, leading to the execution of persecuted leaders of the communist Tudeh party and expulsions of Soviet diplomats from Iran.²⁹¹ However, by early 1989, as their relationship stabilised, both the Soviet Union and Iran decided to expand bilateral ties and a meeting between Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Khomeini in Tehran in 1989 showed that the Ayatollah approved of a more enhanced relationship between the countries.²⁹² Afterwards, prime minister Rafsanjani visited Moscow in June of 1989 and signed a \$6 billion arms deal with the Soviet Union.²⁹³

²⁸³ Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order*, 104.

²⁸⁴ Hunter, 104.

²⁸⁵ Shahram Chubin, 'The Soviet Union and Iran', *Foreign Affairs* 61 (1983 1982): 931.

²⁸⁶ Chubin, 'The Soviet Union and Iran,' 931.

²⁸⁷ Chubin, 934.

²⁸⁸ Chubin, 934.

²⁸⁹ Ray Takeyh, "Iran's Nuclear Calculations", *World Policy Journal* 20, nr. 2 (2003): 148.

²⁹⁰ Takeyh, 148.

²⁹¹ Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 149.

²⁹² Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 104.

²⁹³ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 150.

However, as the Cold War ended and the United States came out on top, Iran had to find some way to structure its relationships with more discretion.²⁹⁴

Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased as President Reagan called the Soviet Union ‘the focus of evil in the modern world,’ and moved to overthrow the Communist regime in Nicaragua, using secret shipments of weapons sent from Iran to the rebels, or ‘contras’, and invaded Grenada in 1983.²⁹⁵ President Reagan took a more offensive approach to the United States’ foreign policy by building-up the military again, where he felt that previous administrations had let it somewhat deteriorate.²⁹⁶ By spurring military spending and labelling the Soviet Union as the ‘evil empire,’ Reagan reignited Cold War hostilities between the two countries.²⁹⁷ As Iran had achieved some successes in its war against Iraq, the United States launched Operation Staunch in 1983 due to fears that a fruitful Iranian offensive against Iraq would result in strategical regional threats to the United States and its allies.²⁹⁸ The operation enforced a worldwide arms embargo on Iran, which has been marked as the first major strategic operation against Iran since the hostage crisis.²⁹⁹ Iranian president Rafsanjani wanted to open-up Iran to the world and attract foreign capital that was needed to rebuild the Iranian economy.³⁰⁰ One of the major parts of this policy was his wish to restore Iran’s relation to the United States, which, he believed, would aid Iran in its economic development, particularly in the energy sector.³⁰¹ Relations with Iran were improved and even though the official policy of dual containment still stood, US companies traded with Iran, particularly in the oil sector, enabling the US to sell Iranian oil on the global market.³⁰²

The United States only discovered that Iran had yet again began working on its nuclear programme in the early 1990’s, by which time opinions were divided on how to deal with the issue efficiently.³⁰³ It was during this period of new regional conflict that Iran was given the label of ‘rogue state’ due to its involvement in the development of nuclear arms, support of

²⁹⁴ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 129.

²⁹⁵ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 106.

²⁹⁶ Hook, 106.

²⁹⁷ Hook, 106.

²⁹⁸ Sokolski and Clawson, *Checking Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, 102.

²⁹⁹ Sokolski and Clawson, 102.

³⁰⁰ Sokolski and Clawson, 105.

³⁰¹ Sokolski and Clawson, 105.

³⁰² Sokolski and Clawson, 105–6.

³⁰³ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 4.

international terrorism, posing a global or regional military threat to others and challenging the basis of international norms.³⁰⁴ As were many aspects of the Islamic Republic, the nuclear programme, too, was mismanaged for most of the first decade of its re-opening.³⁰⁵ President Mohammad Khatami, elected in 1997, was even willing to disregard Iran's nuclear programme in return for American promises that restrictions on trade, investment and other aid would be lessened.³⁰⁶ Khatami called for 'a dialogue of civilisation' between the United States and Iran and for a moment it seemed as though positive progress in their relationship could be made in which factors of track II diplomacy played a role, but could not usher any breakthroughs.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, after a period of easing restriction, in March 1995, an executive order by president Clinton forbade all American investments in Iran's energy sector and on May 6, 1995, Clinton issued executive order 12959, which banned any trade between the United States and Iran.³⁰⁸ In 1996, Clinton furthermore signed into law the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) in response to Iran's continuing nuclear programme and the regime's support for terrorist organisations in the region.³⁰⁹ The act targeted Iran's energy sector and was meant to enforce economic penalties on any company that invested more than \$20 million in it.³¹⁰ In January of 2000, the CIA was reported suggesting that Iran 'may be capable of producing a nuclear weapon now' but the Reagan administration did not act on this as their rapprochement efforts towards President Khatami were of more importance.³¹¹ Madeleine Albright, President Clinton's Secretary of State, attempted to soothe the relationship between the two countries in a speech before the Iran-America Council, a prominent track II initiator, in which she formally apologised for America's role in the 1953 Coup.³¹² Nevertheless, and opposite of what Albright intended, Iran responded unsympathetic to the remarks and Iran's Foreign Minister, Kharrazi, even threatened to sue America, using Albright's own admission in court.³¹³ Later, in March 2000, due to the CIA's new time-frame of Iran's possible possession of a nuclear weapon, President Clinton signed the Iran

³⁰⁴ Khan, *Iran and Nuclear Weapons: Protracted conflict and proliferation*, 77–78.

³⁰⁵ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 46.

³⁰⁶ Pollack, 46.

³⁰⁷ Sokolski and Clawson, *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 107.

³⁰⁸ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions* (Congressional Research Service, 2009), 12.

³⁰⁹ Nader Entessar and Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, *Iran Nuclear Accord and the Remaking of the Middle East* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 15.

³¹⁰ Entessar and Afrasiabi, 15.

³¹¹ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 116.

³¹² Seliktar, 117.

³¹³ Seliktar, 117.

Non-proliferation Act, imposing sanctions on any individual or company involved in Iran's nuclear activities.³¹⁴ The United States were still occupied with perceiving Iran as a rogue state whose actions had to normalise before it could be accepted back in the international community and enjoy the benefits of such standing.³¹⁵

Since Iran was unable to find Western partners to participate in its nuclear programme, it shifted its attention to the Soviet Union and China, with which it signed nuclear cooperation agreements in 1990.³¹⁶ In March of 1990, the Soviet Union and Iran signed a deal in which the USSR would build two VVER 440 water-water energetic reactor's in return for Iranian natural gas.³¹⁷ Further agreements were made in which the Soviet Union and Iran would cooperate in developing their nuclear research for peaceful purposes, according to the two parties.³¹⁸ After the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Russian Federation, Iran and Russia became more intertwined.³¹⁹ Iran's attempts to accumulate arms and Russia's troublesome economic situations ensured that a rather lucrative system of trade was established that eventually led to the transfer of nuclear technology to Iran.³²⁰ The fall of the Soviet Union also left diplomatic institutions like the United Nations ill-equipped to keeping peace in the post-Cold War era and track II diplomacy was more and more viewed as the go-to way of policy-making.³²¹ Iran and Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy signed a \$800 million deal in 1995 that completed the light-water power reactor that the German company Siemens had started to build in the 1970s near Bushehr and another deal that ensured Russian supply of nuclear fuel to Iran for the next ten years.³²² The United States attempted to prevent this deal, since they believed that Iran could acquire plutonium in this way, but Iranian officials argued that this project still uphold the articles of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.³²³ The CIA, at a congressional testimony, commented on the Russian effort to finish the construction of the Bushehr plant and argued that, although the project would not immediately result in Iranian possession of a nuclear weapon, it would give

³¹⁴ Entessar and Afraziabi, 16.

³¹⁵ Judith S. Yaphe, 'US-Iran Relations: Normalization in the Future?' (National Defense University Washington DC Institute For National Strategic Studies, 2002), 2.

³¹⁶ Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation', 310.

³¹⁷ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 25.

³¹⁸ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, 25.

³¹⁹ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 147.

³²⁰ Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution*, 147.

³²¹ Homans, 'Track II Diplomacy'.

³²² Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2-3.; Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 28.

³²³ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2005, 3.

Iran increasing access to Russia's nuclear industry.³²⁴ At the summit talks between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin in Washington in 1994, the question of Iran was put on the table again.³²⁵ In order to calm the fears of the Americans, Yeltsin underscored that Russia had no intentions to sign a new arms agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran.³²⁶ Russia attempted to dampen American fears again in May of 1995 when the two leaders met and Clinton asked Yeltsin to cancel a \$1 billion agreement in sales for light water nuclear reactors to Iran.³²⁷ Yeltsin refused, arguing that Russia's agreement with Iran was similar to an agreement the United States had with North-Korea, to which it was selling similar reactors.³²⁸ However, and according to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, then former president Carter's efforts in North Korea to dissuade them to continue their nuclear programme, have been hailed as an example of successful track II diplomacy in which an ex-official meets with officials of another nation to seek solutions to high-level difficulties.³²⁹ A deal was struck between the United States and Russia in which the Russians agreed to work on one of the Bushehr power plants instead of both, and to provide no more additional reactors or assistance in fuel-cycles to Iran.³³⁰ Iran's ambassador to Russia, Mehdi Safari, in September 1995 told journalists that Iran did not have any desire to obtain nuclear weapons and that the nuclear plant being built at Bushehr would be Iran's 'first and last'.³³¹ The fear that Iran was in the process of acquiring nuclear weapons was enhanced when the director of the CIA told US Congress that Iran had been scouring not only Western but also Asian markets in search for nuclear and missile technology, predominantly China for its nuclear expertise and North-Korea for its missiles.³³² The agreement between the United States and Russia evaporated in 2000 as president Putin's economic advisor argued that, since Iran is a neighbour to Russia, they ought to have a good relationship with it 'including in the field of civilian nuclear energy'.³³³

The United States lost much of its strategic influence in the Gulf regional after the Islamic Revolution took hold of Iran. Its efforts towards nuclear diplomacy also declined as Iran moved

³²⁴ Sokolski and Clawson, *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 29.

³²⁵ Adam Tarock, "US-Iran relations: Heading for confrontation?", *Third World Quarterly* 17, nr. 1 (1 March 1996): 149, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599650035824>.

³²⁶ Tarock, 149.

³²⁷ Tarock, 149.

³²⁸ Tarock, 149.

³²⁹ Homans, 'Track II Diplomacy'.

³³⁰ Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations', 26.

³³¹ Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, *Iranian Nuclear Weapons?*, 28.

³³² Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 85.

³³³ Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations', 26.

closer to the Russians. Attempts were made at diplomatic efforts and track II diplomacy was seen as a possibly fruitful alternative to official diplomacy.

Chapter 8

Holding Iran Accountable: The US and Iran in the post-9/11 Era

This chapter analyses the development of the nuclear relation between the United States and Iran from 2001 to 2015, when the nuclear deal was signed. This chapter focuses on the slow rekindling of US-Iranian relations, the post-9/11 setting of the war on terror and its influence on American foreign policy in the Middle East and the role of international safeguard organisations and treaties in making sure Iran adhered to the agreements made. The chapter also focuses on the deepening tensions and mistrust over Iran's perceived illicit use of its nuclear programme and efforts of the international community to agree on a nuclear deal. Since the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent show of force by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan and across the Middle East, Iran has grown more insecure and the persistent animosity between Washington and Tehran has become Iran's main strategical occupation, which they have used to justify their quest towards obtaining a nuclear weapon.³³⁴

To make up for its expected gradual depletion of reserves of fossil fuels, Iran announced in 2002 that it had designed a 20-years plan in which it would construct a nuclear power plant with a capacity of 6000 Megawatts electric (MWe) to exist alongside the Bushehr plant which the Russians had started to rebuild in 1995.³³⁵ Furthermore, President Khatami announced in 2003 that Iran had begun to develop a complete nuclear fuel cycle, which meant that Iran could conduct the whole operation from the mining and processing of uranium for in the nuclear reactors to processing the spent fuel and its nuclear waste, by itself.³³⁶ Khatami stated that his government sought to extract uranium from a mine at Saghād, an important mine which housed some 1,580,000 tons of uranium ore with an estimated grade of 553 g/tonne and, according to IAEA reports, had an annual production quantity of some 50 tonnes uranium.³³⁷ Apart from Iran's nuclear development, the country also advanced its ballistic and cruise missile technologies, which could carry a nuclear payload and worried Western states.³³⁸ International attention was now fixated on the Shihab-3, suspected of being based on North-Korea's No Dong missile, and with a range of 2,000 kilometres would be able to carry a nuclear warhead to Iran's adversaries.³³⁹

³³⁴ Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations,' 23.

³³⁵ Shannon N. Kile, *Europe and Iran* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

³³⁶ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 3.

³³⁷ 'A History of Iran's Nuclear Program', Weapon Program Background Report, Iran Watch, 8 August 2016, <https://wwwiranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program>.

³³⁸ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2005, 50.

³³⁹ Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation', 321.

In the 2005 elections, former mayor of Tehran and commander of the IRGC, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was elected Iran's new president.³⁴⁰ Tensions between Washington and Tehran grew as Ahmadinejad characterised the West as facilitating and maintaining nuclear 'apartheid' and warned that 'if some try to impose their will on the Iranian people through resort to a language of force and threat with Iran, we will reconsider our entire approach to the nuclear issue.'³⁴¹ Furthermore, Ahmadinejad rejected the EU's deal and increased its supply of IED's to Iraq as well as assistance to the insurgency in the country.³⁴² Predominantly the increase in support for the Iraqi insurgents who fought the American invasion lead to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's advisor, Philip Zelikow, to stipulate in a secret memo that what he had recently seen of Iranian support in Iraq could be seen as an act of war against the United States.³⁴³ Around 2006, Iran began constructing a new enrichment facility – the Fordow plant – near the holy city of Qom.³⁴⁴ This facility was built first at a base of the IRGC and later moved inside a mountain in order to withstand a feared Israeli airstrike on the facility and its estimated 2,800 centrifuges, most of which operational.³⁴⁵ Ali Ardashir Larijani, Ahmadinejad's secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and Iran's top nuclear negotiator between 2005 and 2007 argued that 'if Iran becomes atomic Iran, no longer will anyone dare to challenge it.'³⁴⁶ At Ahmadinejad's annual visit to speak at the United Nations General Assembly, he indicated Tehran's willingness to discuss methods of de-escalating the showdown with the P5+1 and offered to end Iran's production of twenty percent enriched uranium but wanted in return fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor.³⁴⁷ This offer was significant, because it was exactly the problem of the twenty percent enriched uranium which drove Israel to contemplate bombing Iranian nuclear facilities previously.³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the United States did not accept the deal as they believed it was not serious enough and urged that any future offers ought to be submitted to the IAEA.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁰ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 132.

³⁴¹ Murray, 133.

³⁴² Murray, 133.

³⁴³ Murray, 133.

³⁴⁴ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 51.

³⁴⁵ Pollack, 51.

³⁴⁶ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 344.

³⁴⁷ Jungmin Kang e.a., *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 70.

³⁴⁸ Kang e.a., 70.

³⁴⁹ Kang e.a., 70.

Prior to his presidency in 2013, Hassan Rouhani had functioned as Iran's top nuclear negotiator between 1989 and 2005 and argued in a 2006 *Time* magazine article that a nuclear armed Iran would be a destabilising factor in the region, that it would result in a regional arms race and that it would deplete the already limited resources in the region.³⁵⁰ Rouhani nonetheless called for more intense talks with the P5+1 to resolve the outstanding issues surrounding Iran's nuclear programme.³⁵¹ The signing of the Joint Plan of Action with the P5+1 in 2005 was the first step towards increased nuclear diplomacy. Nevertheless, tensions grew high as Iran's nuclear programme was directly targeted by the computer virus Stuxnet, causing the self-destruction of Iranian centrifuges used in the process of enriching uranium and which was, according to former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden, created and used by the United States in cooperation with Israel.³⁵² Just a brief period later, Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated on at least five occasions but in which the United States denied any involvement.³⁵³ However, in an interview with a German newspaper, Israel's Defense minister, Moshe Ya'alon, hinted at Israel's involvement in the attacks.³⁵⁴

The United States' approach to Iran in the years following the attacks of 9/11 should be understood in the context of President Bush's subsequent War on Terror and the perceived threat from radical Islamist governments.³⁵⁵ Bush's foreign policy has largely been built on previous doctrines of deterring and containment of threats, be they Fascist, Communist or Islamist.³⁵⁶ The combination of the perceived threat of radical Islamist regimes and rogue states on their way to becoming nuclear armed characterised the Bush's stance towards Iran.³⁵⁷ Since the early 2000's, US officials have on numerous occasions called for strikes against Iranian nuclear sites and considered a strategy of regime change in Tehran.³⁵⁸ Bush intended to deploy

³⁵⁰ Lesch and Haas, 347.

³⁵¹ Kelsey Davenport, 'Iran, P5+1 Hold "Substantive" Talks', Arms Control Association, 2013, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2013-11/iran-p51-hold-%E2%80%98substantive%E2%80%99-talks>.

³⁵² Dennis C. Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Bombs, Bureaucrats, and Billionaires* (Springer, 2017), 27-28.

³⁵³ Jett, 28.

³⁵⁴ 'Israel behind assassinations of Iran nuclear scientists, Ya'alon hints', The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com, consulted on 30 May 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran/israel-behind-assassinations-of-iran-nuclear-scientists-yaalon-hints-411473>.

³⁵⁵ Tanter, *President Obama and Iran*, 12.

³⁵⁶ Tanter, 12.

³⁵⁷ Tanter, 15.

³⁵⁸ Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation', 319.

small nuclear weapons to destroy underground Iranian military facilities.³⁵⁹ President Bush had also called Iran – along with Iraq and North-Korea – an ‘Axis of Evil’ in a speech, rekindling Reagan’s ‘Evil Empire’ sentiment used during the Cold War.³⁶⁰ The 2002 National Security Strategy stated that rogue regimes seek nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and that the pursuance in obtaining these and the possible trading of these materials and weapons on the global market formed a threat to all nations.³⁶¹ The policy of deterrence was mostly structured to aid the US’ Arab allies in the region and the Bush administration kept the option for a military strike against Iran close at hand in case Iran would attack one of America’s allies.³⁶² America’s foreign policy became centred on four aspects: the geostrategic security of Israel and other Gulf States – in particular Saudi Arabia –, energy security, counter terrorism and the prevention of regional nuclear weapons proliferation.³⁶³ However, even as the US pertained to promote democracy and freedom around the world, it continued to emphasise unilateral action as a legitimate tool of foreign policy and it withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and indicated that it would not support the International Criminal Court.³⁶⁴ This instigated a move away from multilateral cooperation between states in their efforts to sharpen nuclear arms controls.³⁶⁵ The United States were not content with a status-quo in the world but acted in a way that would see America’s power increase to strengthen its own global dominance.³⁶⁶ The Bush administrations had failed to sustain the US’ disarmament commitments which lead to a breach of the authority of the United States in regards to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, instigating a legitimacy problem from which parties who did not adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty benefited.³⁶⁷ Bush continued to loosen the restrictions on the possible use of nuclear weapons by abolishing the so-called ‘firewall’ that had existed between conventional and non-conventional weapons.³⁶⁸ In

³⁵⁹ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 503.

³⁶⁰ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 123.

³⁶¹ ‘The National Security Strategy 2002’, September 2002, 14, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>.

³⁶² Kaussler, *Iran’s Nuclear Diplomacy*, 2013, 5.

³⁶³ Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran*, 19.

³⁶⁴ Simpson, 26.

³⁶⁵ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 502.

³⁶⁶ Simpson, *U.S. Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran*, 28.

³⁶⁷ Tanya Ogilvie-White, “The Defiant States: The Nuclear Diplomacy of North Korea and Iran”, *The Nonproliferation Review* 17, nr. 1 (1 March 2010): 116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700903484702>.

³⁶⁸ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 502.

February of 2006, the US State Department created a new Iran Desk and indicates that it would emphasise training in Farsi and establish a diplomatic post in Dubai to handle any affairs vis-à-vis Iran.³⁶⁹ The resentment of Iran's clerical leadership towards the United States was reiterated in 2006 as Ayatollah Khamenei said that "if it's not this [Iran's nuclear programme], they [US leaders] will find another issue. Their aim is to put us under duress and exhaust us. Their objective is regime change."³⁷⁰ Indeed, there were those active in track II initiatives who actively called for regime-change, but this was mostly done from an ideological standpoint by those who did not perceive a nuclear deal with Iran as a possibility.³⁷¹

The Bush administration sought to discuss the issue of missile defence and non-proliferation with Moscow, as it opposed the nuclear relationship between Russia and Iran in which missiles and nuclear technology were traded.³⁷² During discussions at the 2003 G8 summit in Evian, it proved difficult for Bush to convince Putin to alter Russia's policy towards Iran due to Moscow's economic and geopolitical goals.³⁷³ The Russians have around 300 companies and some 20,000 jobs working at the Bushehr nuclear plant in Iran and as Russia's own nuclear energy sector lacks domestic customers, it is forced to look for a broader audience.³⁷⁴ In addition, Russia favours Tehran's role in the Islamic world and believes that retaining close ties with Tehran results in less problems in Central Asian states close to Russia.³⁷⁵ The United States, however, proved slow in acting on potentially beneficial moments such as a change in leadership at Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy in 2001 when Alexander Rumyantsev – coming from the Kurchatov Institute which pursued scientific cooperation with the US – replaced Adamov – who supported Russia's civilian nuclear exports and assistance to Iran.³⁷⁶ However, Russia's assistance to Iran in regards to the development of its nuclear sector persisted. In the beginning of 2002 the CIA reported that Russia continued to supply Iran with missiles and nuclear programmes and in his testimony before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, the Agency's director, George Tenet, stated that Russia continued to aid Iran in almost all facets of its nuclear programme.³⁷⁷

³⁶⁹ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 117.

³⁷⁰ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 345.

³⁷¹ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

³⁷² Robert J. Einhorn and Gary Samore, 'Ending Russian assistance to Iran's nuclear bomb', *Survival* 44, nr. 2 (1 June 2002): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330212331343332>.

³⁷³ Takeyh, 'Iran's Nuclear Calculations', 26.

³⁷⁴ Takeyh, 26.

³⁷⁵ Takeyh, 26.

³⁷⁶ Einhorn and Samore, 'Ending Russian assistance to Iran's nuclear bomb,' 58.

³⁷⁷ Einhorn and Samore, 59.

Nevertheless, Iran's aims seem to have never been to deploy nuclear weapons against the United States or its troops in the Middle East and Gulf-region but to guarantee the survival of the Islamic Republic and deterring any US intervention in Iran's domestic and foreign policies.³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, America's Intelligence Community stated in 2007 that Iran had maintained an active weaponization programme at least until 2003.³⁷⁹ These findings were supported by various European and Middle Eastern intelligence services.³⁸⁰ Interestingly, the IAEA concluded in 2010 that they had important evidence that pointed towards 'past and current undisclosed activities' by the Iranian military to develop a nuclear warhead and that these activities progressed past 2004.³⁸¹ Furthermore, in 2008, the Bush administration designated Iran's IRGC's as a proliferator of weapons of mass destruction and its elite Quds force as a sponsor of terrorism, resulting in the implementation of economic sanctions.³⁸² In August of 2008, at a talk at the Aspen Institute, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the audience that the United States had been quite successful when it came to Iran.³⁸³ This was true in the sense that the Bush administration managed to get the United Nations Security Council to agree on imposing sanctions on Iran, even though analysts argue that these measures have proven too weak to actually pressure the Iranian regime, and that the US had abstained from a direct war with Iran even as tensions rose to a maximum by the end of 2008, when Iran tested some of its ballistic missiles in a show of force.³⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Bush's unilateral approach to Iran has been widely criticised even as he came to accept the EU's, Russian and Chinese position that Iran might in the future be allowed to have a civilian nuclear programme and be able to enrich its own uranium, but condoned the possibility that Iran use that nuclear technology and turn it into a militarised industry.³⁸⁵ The overall relationship between the United States and Iran has fluctuated on numerous occasions as one side attempted to initiate constructive talks only to be rebuffed by the other side and have this act repeated over time with both sides taking the successive role of both the initiator and the refuser.³⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the following years would also see diplomatic progress halted as Iran's

³⁷⁸ Bahgat, 'Nuclear proliferation', 320.

³⁷⁹ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 52.

³⁸⁰ Pollack, 52.

³⁸¹ Pollack, 52.

³⁸² Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 117.

³⁸³ Murray, 141.

³⁸⁴ Murray, 141.

³⁸⁵ Murray, 142.

³⁸⁶ William Luers, Thomas Pickering, and Jim Walsh, 'A solution for the US-Iran nuclear standoff', *New York Review of Books* 55, nr. 4 (2008): 2.

Foreign Minister, Mohamad Zarif, told reporters in 2014 that, when it came to nuclear research and development, Iran would not accept any limitations.³⁸⁷ Ayatollah Khamenei went even further and announced that Iran's 'nuclear science movement should not come to a halt or even slow down'.³⁸⁸ In the end, both sides made concessions that would eventually lead to the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. Nevertheless, Iran's Supreme Leader has always been the country's most important and influential policymaker.³⁸⁹ But even Khamenei has expressed his support of the nuclear deal, as the relief from sanctions would be beneficial to Iran.³⁹⁰

For years, IAEA inspectors visited Iranian declared nuclear facilities to inspect the absence of any illicit nuclear activities.³⁹¹ However, these inspectors were unable to find any parallel nuclear programme next to Iran's declared civilian programme.³⁹² This changed however in 2002, when a group of Iranian dissidents – the National Council of Resistance of Iran – who had been living in France, accused Iran's leadership of building secret nuclear facilities throughout the country, uncovering that the Iranian government had spent the last fifteen years stimulating its illicit nuclear development.³⁹³ The information of Iran's illicit activities was supposedly leaked by Israel's Mossad to the Iranians in exile because of American inactions in response to CIA reporting that Iran and Pakistan had formed a nuclear pact as far back as 1987 and of which all subsequent US administrations had been informed but failed to act.³⁹⁴ The dissidents pointed to a secret uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, as well as a heavy water production facility at Arak.³⁹⁵ Thereupon, IAEA inspectors visited the sites and reported that components to construct some 1000 extra centrifuges to be used for uranium enrichment were found.³⁹⁶ The IAEA began its investigation into alleged Iranian clandestine nuclear activities and

³⁸⁷ Richard Nephew, 'The Grand Bargain: What Iran Conceded in the Nuclear Talks', *Brookings* (blog), 18 April 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/18/the-grand-bargain-what-iran-conceded-in-the-nuclear-talks/>.

³⁸⁸ Nephew 'The Grand Bargain: What Iran Conceded in the Nuclear Talks'.

³⁸⁹ Lesch and Haas, 352.

³⁹⁰ Steven A. Cook, 'The Iran Deal: Tastes Great! Less Filling!', Council on Foreign Relations, 20 July 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/iran-deal-tastes-great-less-filling>.

³⁹¹ Ogilvie-White, 'The Defiant States: The Nuclear Diplomacy of North Korea and Iran', 123.

³⁹² Ogilvie-White, 123.

³⁹³ Ogilvie-White, 123.

³⁹⁴ Grégoire Mallard, *Fallout: Nuclear Diplomacy in an Age of Global Fracture* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 277.

³⁹⁵ Ogilvie-White, 'The Defiant States: The Nuclear Diplomacy of North Korea and Iran', 123.

³⁹⁶ Sokolski and Clawson, *Checking Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 31.

concluded after its examination that a number of these activities had violated the safeguard agreements.³⁹⁷ An IAEA report suggests that in the early 2000s, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, former head of Iran's Physics Research Centre (PHRC), led the AMAD project – Iran's scientific project to create a nuclear weapon.³⁹⁸ The IAEA Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, travelled to Tehran in February 2003 to meet with Khatami and other high-ranking Iranian officials.³⁹⁹ During the visit, the AEOI confirmed the existence of a heavy-water production plant at Arak and a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment plant at Natanz.⁴⁰⁰ Iran's initial response to the IAEA's uncover of its illicit activities was that they had no legal obligation to inform the AEA yet, as the uranium had not yet been inserted into the centrifuges.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, Iranian officials stated that the country was not abandoning its nuclear programme and made the argument that IAEA inspectors should monitor its activities to ensure the absence of illicit Iranian activities and in that way satisfy the international community.⁴⁰² Even though IAEA inspectors were allowed to conduct research into illicit nuclear activities in Iran, ElBaradei reported back to the IAEA Board of Governors in August 2003 that Iran had not given the inspectors the access they required and that incomplete and contradictory data had been provided to them regarding the most important nuclear facilities.⁴⁰³ Additionally, equipment and work-stations used to work on the nuclear project were thoroughly cleaned or disposed of to hide the precise nature of what had been done there.⁴⁰⁴ This led to the implementation of a resolution in September 2003 which urged Iran to sign and comply by an Additional Protocol to the IAEA's safeguard agreement and indicated that if Iran failed to resolve the issues surrounding its nuclear energy sector, the matter would be transferred to the United Nation's Security Council.⁴⁰⁵ Iran adopted the Additional Protocol in the Tehran Declaration in December 2003, but in exchange, ElBaradei had to postpone publishing his observation that Iran had been caught secretly building a nuclear weapons

³⁹⁷ Kerr, 'Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations', 1.

³⁹⁸ Stephen Pullinger, 'Final Assessment on Past and Present Outstanding Issues Regarding Iran's Nuclear Programme', 2 December 2015, 5.

³⁹⁹ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2006, 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 4.

⁴⁰¹ Mallard, *Fallout*, 277.

⁴⁰² Paul Kerr, 'U.S. Offer Fails to End EU-Iran Impasse', Arms Control Association, April 2005, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005-04/iran-nuclear-briefs/us-offer-fails-end-eu-iran-impasse>.

⁴⁰³ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2006, 5.

⁴⁰⁴ Pullinger, 'Final Assessment on Past and Present Outstanding Issues Regarding Iran's Nuclear Programme', 5.

⁴⁰⁵ Kile, *Europe and Iran*, 2005, 5.

programme in an IAEA report.⁴⁰⁶ Between 2003 and 2005, predominantly France, Germany and the United Kingdom – the EU3 – have led the diplomatic mission with Iran to stop it from producing nuclear weapons.⁴⁰⁷ Iran complied between 2003 and 2005 but declared the EU3's diplomatic mission a failure and continued its enrichment programme in 2005, prompting the IAEA's Board of Directors to hand over the matter to the United Nation's Security Council in early 2006, primarily resulting in sanctions on Iran.⁴⁰⁸ The UNSC resolution 1696 from July of 2006 mentioned that Iran had not yet taken the steps that the IAEA required of it, such as Iran's continuation of its enrichment activities, in order to move their relation forward.⁴⁰⁹ The failure of Iran to comply with these directives were again stressed in Security Council Resolution 1737 from December of 2006, in which was stated that Iran was still not cooperating with the IAEA in line with the details of the Additional Protocol, which both parties signed, and that Iran had not adhered to the previous UNSC resolution.⁴¹⁰ The subsequent strategies of the United States, the United Nations Security Council and various European Union Member States have been to implementing sanctions between 2006 and 2010.⁴¹¹ Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State under president Bush, believed that the EU-Iran initiative was breaking apart and therefore instructed John Bolton, the United States' ambassador to the United Nations, to set a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations.⁴¹² The meeting was used to announce a change in American foreign policy and indicate their willingness to support a nuclear deal but only if Iran accepted to suspend its enrichment programme.⁴¹³ The EU3, with the support of the United States, insisted that Iran halt its uranium enrichment programme.⁴¹⁴ The most important aspects of their diplomatic efforts evolved around “(...) guarantees that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes,” and both sides agreed to construct a long-term agreement that

⁴⁰⁶ Mallard, *Fallout*, 278.

⁴⁰⁷ Jungmin Kang and Frank N. Von Hippel, *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 67.

⁴⁰⁸ Kang and Von Hippel, *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea*, 67.

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Security Council Resolution 1696’, United Nation Security Council, 31 July 2006, 1, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1696>.

⁴¹⁰ ‘Security Council Resolution 1737’, UNSCR, 27 December 2006, 1–2, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1737>.

⁴¹¹ Kang e.a., *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea*, 67.

⁴¹² Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 130–31.

⁴¹³ Murray, 130–31.

⁴¹⁴ Kang and Von Hippel, 67.

would see these aspects solidified.⁴¹⁵ The participation of the United States in 2006 was of more importance as by now also Russia and China had entered the discussions.⁴¹⁶

Whilst in the mids of his campaign to become president, Barack Obama pointed out that applying sanctions and threats on Iran would not be fruitful and that, instead, the United States should seek engagement with Iran based on the absence of preconditions.⁴¹⁷ This exact point was made in 2008 by members of the National Iranian American Council, a track II initiative, when they published a paper discussing alternative methods of progressing the relation between the United States and Iran.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, Obama criticised his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, for her support of the government's decision to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp as a terrorist organisation, stating that such actions had the potential of justifying American military responses in Iran and argued that only the diplomatic route should be taken as he offered to meet with president Ahmadinejad, because "Presidents talk to their enemies."⁴¹⁹ The P5+1 had to get used to Obama's foreign policy strategy of initiating direct diplomatic talks without the need for certain prerequisites.⁴²⁰ Ahmadinejad responded to Obama's offer of engaging in unconditional talks by stating Iran's own preconditions, namely that the United States should no longer object to its nuclear programme, that the US ought to withdraw all its troops from the region and end its support for Israel, and required that Obama apologise for all the crimes 'committed against the Iranian nation'.⁴²¹ The Obama administration went around this by directly approaching Ayatollah Khamenei and sent him a secret letter proposing to establish a direct channel to work on a structure for future nuclear talks.⁴²² The following year, pursuing a different strategy towards dealing with Iran due to the failure of the attempted outreach efforts, Obama led a number of multilateral sanctions against Iran which crippled the country's economy.⁴²³ Iranian leadership feared that these economic sanctions might steer the country towards another revolution, with

⁴¹⁵ Paul Kerr, 'U.S. Offer Fails to End EU-Iran Impasse', Arms Control Association, April 2005, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005-04/iran-nuclear-briefs/us-offer-fails-end-eu-iran-impasse>.

⁴¹⁶ Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 135.

⁴¹⁷ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 161.

⁴¹⁸ Luers, Pickering, and Walsh, 'A solution for the US-Iran nuclear standoff', 2.

⁴¹⁹ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 162.

⁴²⁰ Seliktar, 162.

⁴²¹ Seliktar, 162–63.

⁴²² Seliktar, 163.

⁴²³ Lesch and Haas, *The Middle East and the United States*, 355.

the Arab Spring already in progress across the Middle East, and thus was motivated to engage in negotiation with the United States regarding nuclear related issues.⁴²⁴

President Obama vowed to end the escalating development of the previous administration and urged the world's nuclear powers to demolish their nuclear stockpiles.⁴²⁵ During a public speech in Prague in 2009, president Obama clarified his aims in regards to the future of arms control under his administration as he said: 'I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.'⁴²⁶ Obama reiterated this commitment in his Nuclear Posture Review of April 2010, in which he said that the United States would not utilise, nor threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states who adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and operate in conformity with their obligations towards the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, Obama sealed a deal with Russia in March 2010 in which both sides agreed to reduce the amount of deployed nuclear warheads.⁴²⁸ In 2011, Obama attempted to create a high-level military communications system between the United States and Iran, which was favoured by president Ahmadinejad but loathed by Ayatollah Khamenei and therefore sabotaged by the IRGC.⁴²⁹ And in 2012, the US Senate voted in favour of a resolution that would dismiss 'any United States policy that would rely on efforts to contain a nuclear weapons-capable Iran,' following Obama's stated tactic of not relying on containment but on keeping Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons in the first place.⁴³⁰ Obama called with president Rouhani on September 27, 2013, marking it the first contact at the highest levels of government since diplomatic ties were broken after the revolution.⁴³¹

Iran seemed ready to discuss its nuclear weapons programme with the IAEA in 2012 but continued to blame the United States, the Europeans and Israel of conducting a disinformation campaign which had supposedly fabricated evidence of Iran's supposed weapons programme.⁴³² Nevertheless, in 2012 the IAEA reported that Iran had increased the amount of centrifuges at its

⁴²⁴ Lesch and Haas, *The Middle East and the United States*, 355.

⁴²⁵ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 503.

⁴²⁶ Hook, 589.

⁴²⁷ Hook, 589.

⁴²⁸ Hook, 503.

⁴²⁹ 'The Urgent Need for a U.S.-Iran Hotline', *International Crisis Group* Crisis Group Middle East Briefing N°77 (23 April 2020): 6.

⁴³⁰ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 259.

⁴³¹ Davenport, 'Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran'.

⁴³² Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 52.

Natanz site from 164 in 2006 to 9,000 as well as start centrifuge operations at the Fordow plant.⁴³³ Iran had kept the existence of its Fordow plant a secret until 2009, when the United States together with European nations exposed its existence, thereby again violating its Safeguard Agreements under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.⁴³⁴ And when the IAEA attempted to inspect the Parchin military complex, where supposedly Iranian scientist were working on nuclear weapons and where satellite images pictured a large-scale clean-up of the facility, Iran again blocked IAEA inspectors.⁴³⁵ Furthermore, on October 10th 2015, after both parties already agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran tested a medium-range ballistic missile, the Emad, which was able to carry a nuclear weapon, and therefore in violation of the previously implemented Security Council Resolution 1929 from 2010, which specifically forbids the testing of these ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear load.⁴³⁶

The nuclear relation between the United States and Iran proved troublesome in the period after 9/11 as US foreign policy changed once more. Both sides initiated talks and refused them in turn. However, efforts, both in official diplomacy through the United Nations Security Council and members of the European Union, and through track II initiatives, solutions to Iran's nuclear programme were sought. This was a challenge, as the IAEA uncovered far-reaching breaches of its safeguard agreements and sanctions had to be imposed on Iran. The first contact between both presidents in 2013 signalled a step in the right direction and track II initiatives were being organised across the Middle East and Europe in order to find common ground on Iran's nuclear issues.

⁴³³ Kang e.a., *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea*, 67.

⁴³⁴ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 51.

⁴³⁵ Pollack, 52.

⁴³⁶ Davenport, 'Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran'.

Chapter 9

Backstage at the Nuclear Deal

This chapter will analyse the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and examine the outcome of years of discussions. Thereafter, it will investigate the influence of track II diplomacy on the nuclear deal by assessing the various track II initiatives, its participants and its successes. Also analysed here is the history of track II initiatives in the Middle East.

The use of track II diplomacy by America to engage with its various adversaries around the world is not a new phenomenon, as already during the Cold War, America and the Soviet Union were actively engaged in track II diplomacy through initiatives as the Pugwash and Dartmouth conferences, which aided the establishment of ideas that were later adopted in accords about arms control.⁴³⁷ Especially since the end of the Cold War, countries that had to resolve long-standing issues moved towards track II diplomacy as domestic sensitivities or a lack of diplomatic relations kept them from engaging in direct diplomatic communications.⁴³⁸ Therefore, actors chose to focus increasingly on informal channels of communication to resolve disputes in conflict striven areas of the world and in which especially Western-based nongovernmental organisations, universities and governments were involved.⁴³⁹ According to the study of Dalia Dassa Kaye, hundreds of such unofficial security related dialogues have been taking place across the Middle East and South Asia in which academics, diplomats and other politicians, policy analysts, NGOs and journalists have had a large part to play over the last twenty years in attempts to find a solution to these conflicts, which are often of vital importance to Western security.⁴⁴⁰

Between 2006 and 2008, various attempts were made to conclude a deal that would suspend Iranian nuclear activities, but of no avail, as Iran continued to defy the orders and resolutions of the UN Security Council by arguing that its peaceful enrichment programme posed no serious threat to the international community.⁴⁴¹ These efforts were again discussed at the G8 meeting in 2007 at which world leaders expressed their concern over Iran's nuclear programme

⁴³⁷ Jones, 'U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 348.

⁴³⁸ Dalia Dassa Kaye, 'Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy', in *Talking to the Enemy*, 1ste pr., Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia (RAND Corporation, 2007), 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg592nsrd.8>.

⁴³⁹ Kaye, 'Rethinking Track Two Diplomacy', in *Talking to the Enemy*, 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Kaye, 1–2.

⁴⁴¹ Kang e.a., *Assessment of the Nuclear Programs of Iran and North Korea*, 79.

and its unwillingness to focus on these issues.⁴⁴² The members of the G8 urged Iran to comply with previously adopted United Nation Security Council Resolutions designed to adjourn Iran's enrichment and reprocessing capabilities, continue to commit to the non-proliferation agreements and allow for a constructive nuclear negotiation with the EU and P5+1.⁴⁴³ Between 2011 and 2015, the IAEA reported on numerous occasions that Iran was avoiding the IAEA's questions on the weaponisation of its nuclear sector.⁴⁴⁴ In 2013, after some decades of animosity, a decrease in trust on both sides and the escalation of tensions, the President of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation signed a 'Joint Statement on a Framework for Cooperation' in Tehran with the IAEA and the P5+1.⁴⁴⁵ The agreement was centred around creating dialogue and cooperation between the IAEA and Iran in order to ensure Iran developed its nuclear programme for peaceful means by resolving any remaining issues, such as verification of particular sites and the disclosure of sensitive information regarding mines, heavy water production plants, new research reactors, information on possible locations for future nuclear plants and possible future technologies.⁴⁴⁶ The agreement implemented most of what IAEA director-general ElBaradei had already indicated in 2003, with the inclusion that Iran was now allowed to enrich low levels of uranium for solely peaceful purposes.⁴⁴⁷ This ensured that the P5+1 and the IAEA got a role in Iran's nuclear decision-making.⁴⁴⁸

All the diplomatic efforts, discussions and conflict over Iran's nuclear programme and how to deal with it climaxed with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015.⁴⁴⁹ On the 14th of July 2015, the G5+1 – the United States, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and Germany –, the European Union and Iran agreed on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).⁴⁵⁰ Five days later, on July 20th, the members of the

⁴⁴² 'President Bush to Attend Group of Eight (G-8) Summit in Germany', Fact-sheet, White House Archives, 2007, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/g8/2007/>.

⁴⁴³ 'President Bush to Attend Group of Eight (G-8) Summit in Germany'.

⁴⁴⁴ 'A History of Iran's Nuclear Program'.

⁴⁴⁵ 'Joint Statement on a Framework for Cooperation', *IAEA*, nr. GOV/INF/2013/14 (11 November 2013): 1.

⁴⁴⁶ 'Joint Statement on a Framework for Cooperation', 1–4.

⁴⁴⁷ Mallard, *Fallout*, 280.

⁴⁴⁸ Richard Nephew, 'The Grand Bargain: What Iran Conceded in the Nuclear Talks', *Brookings* (blog), 18 April 2015, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/04/18/the-grand-bargain-what-iran-conceded-in-the-nuclear-talks/>.

⁴⁴⁹ 'Resolution 2231 (2015) on Iran Nuclear Issue', United Nations Security Council, consulted on 27 May 2020, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/2231/background>.

⁴⁵⁰ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 350.

United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2231 (2015) which ratified the JCPOA.⁴⁵¹ Then, 90 days after this, on October 18th, ‘official adoption day’ started the process of implementing all the responsibilities stipulated in the JCPOA and after the IAEA concluded on January 16th 2016 that Iran had indeed committed to these responsibilities and allowed more thorough IAEA inspections, sanctions imposed by the US, EU and UN were partially lifted.⁴⁵² All parties involved regarded the JCPOA as a step in the right direction to positively influence peace in the region and internationally, as it reaffirmed the promise of Iran not to pursue nuclear weapons in the future.⁴⁵³ The JCPOA also lays-out a roadmap of the development of Iran’s peaceful nuclear programme towards a commercial programme in line with the rules concerning non-proliferation.⁴⁵⁴ Additionally, the agreement lifted the previously implemented sanctions by the UN Security Council as well as providing Iran gradual access to international trade, technology, finance and energy sectors.⁴⁵⁵

In the accord it was agreed upon that Iran would dispose of a large amount of its uranium reserves, decrease the amount of gas centrifuges by sixty percent, not construct any new heavy-water plants and Iran would only produce low-enriched uranium for fifteen years, so that it could not be potentially weaponised, as well as agree to be subjected to intense IAEA verification.⁴⁵⁶ By 2015, Iran had a nuclear stockpile of around 8.3 tons of low-enriched uranium, enough fuel for seven nuclear weapons, provided that the uranium would be further enriched to be useful for military purposes.⁴⁵⁷ However, according to the JCPOA, Iran was only allowed to stock 300 kilograms of low-enriched uranium and therefore it shipped the largest part of it to Russia in December of 2015 in order to comply with the agreements.⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, much of the JCPOA’s agreements were based on the gamble that Iran’s political environment would have

⁴⁵¹ ‘Resolution 2231 (2015) on Iran Nuclear Issue’.

⁴⁵² Kelsey Davenport, ‘The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) at a Glance’, Arms Control Association, May 2018, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/JCPOA-at-a-glance>.

⁴⁵³ ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action’, 14 July 2015, 1-4, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/122460/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf>.

⁴⁵⁴ ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action’, 1-2.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action’, 1-2.

⁴⁵⁶ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, 350.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘A History of Iran’s Nuclear Program’.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘A History of Iran’s Nuclear Program’.

improved by 2025, as some of the measures put forward in the JCPOA last for only fifteen years.⁴⁵⁹

According to professor Peter Jones, a long-time participant in track II efforts, ‘track II dialogues made the unthinkable a reality’.⁴⁶⁰ Jones argued that one of the major accomplishments of track II diplomacy is its ability to make problematic issues discussable and publicly known.⁴⁶¹ But, as Dennis Jett has argued, there are loads of organisations and individuals involved one way or another in track II initiatives surrounding the Iran nuclear deal, making it nearly impossible to cover all of them or structure them in any systematic way.⁴⁶² The success of track II initiatives are measured by the establishment of relationships based on trust, respect and mutual understanding, the quality of the participants present at the various initiatives, the extent to which both sides perceive occurring change and the transmission of knowledge as a result of the initiatives to the leaders of government on all sides.⁴⁶³ While there have been many track two interactions between Americans and Iranians, there has been relatively little analysis of this activity.⁴⁶⁴ Therefore, analysing these efforts is important.

Track II initiatives between Iran and the United States already started in the 1990s as the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine initiated a scientific engagement programme with Iran in 1999 and continued further into the 2000s, as track II initiatives on political and security related topics continued, predominantly organised by the United Nations Association (UNA) and the Rockefellers Brothers Fund (RBF).⁴⁶⁵ What also aided the track II initiatives was that many Iranian officials, like Deputy Foreign Minister and later Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Javad Zarif, had enjoyed their educations in the United States and therefore were accustomed to, and schooled in, Western perspectives on international affairs.⁴⁶⁶ However, as Khatami’s government was replaced by the newly elected Ahmadinejad,

⁴⁵⁹ Steven A. Cook, ‘The Iran Deal: Tastes Great! Less Filling!’, Council on Foreign Relations, 20 July 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/iran-deal-tastes-great-less-filling>.

⁴⁶⁰ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁴⁶¹ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁴⁶² Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 47.

⁴⁶³ Peter Jones, ‘U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011: What Have We Learned? Where Are We Going?’, *Negotiation Journal* 30, nr. 4 (2014): 356, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12067>.

⁴⁶⁴ Jones, 348.

⁴⁶⁵ Daniel Wertz, ‘Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea’, *The National Committee on North Korea*, June 2017, 5.

⁴⁶⁶ Wertz, ‘Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea’, 5.

track II initiatives regressed as practitioners on the Iranian side were threatened with arrests due to their close links with the United States.⁴⁶⁷ By 2010, new track II initiatives focused on scientific exchanges and technical dialogues around Iran's uranium enrichment programme and the risk of future proliferation.⁴⁶⁸ These brought together members of the scientific communities of both countries and were led by the National Academies.⁴⁶⁹ The United States have since predominantly utilised track II diplomacy to support formal negotiations, or track I diplomacy, with Iran.⁴⁷⁰

Many participants in various forms of track II diplomacy moved from think-tanks and other track II organisations to important positions in the Obama administration and gave Iran and the United States an opening to discuss issues surrounding Iran's nuclear programme.⁴⁷¹ Nevertheless, although Obama hinted towards a better relationship between the United States and Iran upon the start of his presidency, Obama's first term in office was still focused on the placement of sanctions and other kinds of economic restrictions on Iran prior to seeking engagement.⁴⁷² This policy of sanctions is ascribed to Dennis Ross, Obama's senior official in engaging with Iran, who had written academically about the strategy of pressuring Iran economically to gain a better diplomatic position for future negotiations before he joined Obama's administration.⁴⁷³ His earlier participation in various forms of track II diplomacy and by studying earlier policies regarding the engagement with Iran as well as his later influence on Obama's official policy, indicate in this case that track II diplomacy had impact on Obama's official position on Iran. Nevertheless, this early policy adopted by the Obama administration meant that it was more difficult to have track II influencing official administration policy as the focus was on economic sanctions first to amass sufficient political leverage to pressure Iran on certain issues.⁴⁷⁴ Others, on the other hand, blame the Iranian obstinacy, pressure from Israel and Congressional activism for the limited influence of track II diplomacy on official policy during

⁴⁶⁷ Wertz, 'Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea,' 5–6.

⁴⁶⁸ Wertz, 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Wertz, 'Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea', 6.

⁴⁷⁰ Nate Allen e.a., 'Bridging Divides: Track II Diplomacy in the Middle East', nr. Policy Workshop 2013 (2013): 8.

⁴⁷¹ Suzanne DiMaggio, 'Track II Diplomacy', 11 October 2010, [https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/track-ii-diplomacy/](https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/track-ii-diplomacy;); Wertz, 'Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea', 6.

⁴⁷² Jones, 'U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 352.

⁴⁷³ Jones, 353.

⁴⁷⁴ Jones, 353.

Obama's first term.⁴⁷⁵ And, interestingly, there was very little cooperation and coordination between the various track II initiatives as 'it was a melange of different things going on'.⁴⁷⁶

The Obama administration did, in fact, listen to the results of track II initiatives, but the political sphere at the time made it very difficult, if not impossible, to act on them.⁴⁷⁷ Some track II initiatives focused on specific details of Iran's nuclear programme, such as levels of enrichment or amount of centrifuges, whilst others focused on the broader topic.⁴⁷⁸ Interestingly, participants in track II dialogues argued that initiatives exclusively focused on the nuclear issue had the smallest chance of succeeding, as these initiatives would eventually lead to a zero-sum game and therefore more difficult to influence.⁴⁷⁹ The presidency of Rouhani in 2013 brought about change again as participants that had previously been involved in track II efforts but put aside by Ahmadinejad, returned, including Javad Zarif, this time as Iran's Foreign Minister.⁴⁸⁰ From thereon, track II dialogues focused on policy and the interaction between those outside of government with high-level American and Iranian officials and these efforts complemented the talks that were already underway between Iran and the P5+1.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁵ Jones, 'U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 353.

⁴⁷⁶ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁴⁷⁷ Jones, 'U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 353.

⁴⁷⁸ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁴⁷⁹ Jones, 'U.S.–Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 356.

⁴⁸⁰ Wertz, 'Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea', 6.

⁴⁸¹ Wertz, 6.

Chapter 10

The Backstage Actors of the Nuclear Deal

This chapter analyses the different track II participants in the informal dialogues around Iran's nuclear deal. Here is analysed and assessed the influence that track II diplomacy and these various participants had on the nuclear deal. In this chapter, various track II diplomatic efforts will be analysed. A particular focus rests on the impact of non-governmental organisations, interest groups and individuals active in track II initiatives. An attempt has been made to structure various track II initiatives around scholars and academics, social movements, interest groups and media, business interests, international organisations and NGOs in order to distinguish between the different possible interests in the Iranian nuclear deal.

The influence of academics and scholars has been significant. For example, the announcement that the United States was supporting European efforts to construct a deal with Iran was followed by a letter from president Ahmadinejad to Bush, which has since been described as interrogative, insulting, naïve and bizarre.⁴⁸² Whilst many members of the US intelligence community analysed the letter, discussion among pundits, commentators and scholars erupted.⁴⁸³ This had effect on official policy, as Brookings scholar Ivo Daadler advised Bush to just ignore the content of the letter but respond to the rapprochement nevertheless.⁴⁸⁴ Columbia University's Gulf/2000 Project has proven to be one of the most influential track II initiatives since its creation in 1993.⁴⁸⁵ The project focused on the creation of a wide network of experts on the Gulf countries, organise conferences and workshops to this goal and maintaining a library that houses information that enabled the participants to keep up-to-date and engaged.⁴⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Gulf/2000 Project has focused extensively on US-Iran relations and organised a workshop on Iran's nuclear policy already in 1997 and continued to fund panels and other engaging activities between the United States and Iran on a variety of issues at the annual Middle East Studies Association conference in 1996 and 1997.⁴⁸⁷ According to Gary Sick, executive director of the Gulf/2000 project and former member of the US National Security Council under president Ford, the historical rivalry in the Gulf and the so-called 'Cold War' in the Gulf region

⁴⁸² Murray, *US Foreign Policy and Iran*, 2009, 135.

⁴⁸³ Murray, 136.

⁴⁸⁴ Murray, 136.

⁴⁸⁵ 'The Gulf/2000 Project', The Gulf/2000 Project, consulted on 26 May 2020, <https://gulf2000.columbia.edu/about.shtml>.

⁴⁸⁶ 'The Gulf/2000 Project'.

⁴⁸⁷ 'The Gulf/2000 Project'.

led to distrust and a decrease in dialogue.⁴⁸⁸ Furthermore, a lack of a means to distribute and analyse accurate information about Iran led to a distorted perception of what was happening in the country.⁴⁸⁹ Next to this, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), in cooperation with the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation had been organising regional track II initiatives in Europe three times a year and organised the Public Policy and Nuclear Threats programme, bringing together the knowledge of scientists, policy analysts and academics to discuss issues surrounding America's nuclear strategy and policy.⁴⁹⁰ The ongoing track II dialogues between American and Iranian officials and academics led to the Interim Agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, a set of initial agreements that would provide Iran with some sanction relief in return for the gradual rollback of its nuclear programme, in November 2014.⁴⁹¹ Other academics and scholars involved in track II initiatives are mentioned later in the section concerning international organisations and NGO's, as they are often participating in events which are coordinated on an organisational level.

Whereas social movements are often critical of certain official government policies, interest groups, on the other hand, are more supportive of its governments foreign policy objectives.⁴⁹² Private citizens belonging to both groups – social groups seeking to diverge a government's approach or interest groups aligned with policy-makers – frequently engage in track II diplomacy by communicating with members of like-minded groups or individuals anywhere in the world by using social media and together seek to construct a solution to a shared problem.⁴⁹³ Often, these movements and groups bond together to form transnational advocacy groups who urge multiple national governments or international organisations to enact certain changes.⁴⁹⁴ This is often achieved through the application of pressure on the existing policy, giving support for political parties and policy-makers whose views align with that of the advocacy group, launch public information campaigns and mass-mobilise their supporters for their cause.⁴⁹⁵ During Khatami's presidency, ideological reformers, such as adherers to Iran's Green Movement, worked

⁴⁸⁸ Gary Sick, 'The Gulf/2000 Project', *Review of Middle East Studies* 30, nr. 2 (1996): 154.

⁴⁸⁹ Gary Sick, 'The Gulf/2000 Project', 154.

⁴⁹⁰ 'Public Policy and Nuclear Threats', Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, consulted on 28 May 2020, [https://igcc.ucsd.edu/research/nuclear-security/public-policy-nuclear-threats.html#History.;](https://igcc.ucsd.edu/research/nuclear-security/public-policy-nuclear-threats.html#History.) DiMaggio, 'Track II Diplomacy'.

⁴⁹¹ Allen e.a., 'Bridging Divides: Track II Diplomacy in the Middle East', 8.

⁴⁹² Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 428.

⁴⁹³ Hook, 428.

⁴⁹⁴ Hook, 428.

⁴⁹⁵ Hook, 428.

continuously to convince the West of Iran's nuclear intentions and argued that they did 'not want a nuclear bomb, but instead desires peace for the world and democracy for Iran.'⁴⁹⁶ The influence of these reformist movements was significant and the protests calling for more engagement with the West and a more open stance towards nuclear related issues were therefore violently crushed by the conservatives on the opposite side.⁴⁹⁷ The media, either through its traditional outlets or modern social media, have the power to lift an issue to the highest levels and provoke a change in policy or, in the case of the nuclear deal with Iran, has the power to influence its outcome by spreading a certain standpoint.⁴⁹⁸ Also, the wider public is able to express its view to those in power. American citizens criticised the American government in 2014 and 2015 for failing to form a unified front in matters of the most important national security issues, such as Iran's nuclear programme, causing some form of public discontent and spurring debate.⁴⁹⁹

However, not everyone was supportive of a nuclear deal with Iran. In 2014, as the P5+1 and Iran came close to finalising their agreement, American Republican congressional leaders invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to hold an address in front of Congress – without informing the White House – in which Netanyahu argued that conducting any nuclear agreement with Iran would result in Iran eventually obtaining nuclear weapons.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, under the leadership of Republican Senator Tom Cotton, a letter was sent to the Iranian leadership in March of 2015 to express his position, as well as those of the 46 other Republicans Senators who signed the letter, against a nuclear agreement with Iran and stressed their role as approvers of any deal as members of Congress.⁵⁰¹ The letter was used to try to scare the Iranians away from a nuclear deal by arguing that the next president could easily reverse such a deal.⁵⁰² Interestingly, it was uncovered that Senator Cotton's attempts to thwart the nuclear deal were linked to the fact that he had received millions of dollars from pro-Israel lobbyists.⁵⁰³ A New York Times article stated that Senator Cotton and other Republican politicians had received

⁴⁹⁶ Lesch, Haas, and Gartenstein-Ross, *The Middle East and the United States*, 347.

⁴⁹⁷ Lesch, Haas, en Gartenstein-Ross, 347–48.

⁴⁹⁸ Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 16.

⁴⁹⁹ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 227.

⁵⁰⁰ Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 34–35.

⁵⁰¹ 'Cotton and 46 Fellow Senators to Send Open Letter to the Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran', Tom Cotton - Arkansas Senator, 9 March 2015, https://www.cotton.senate.gov/p=press_release&id=120.; Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 1–2.

⁵⁰² The Editorial Board, 'Opinion | Republican Idiocy on Iran', *The New York Times*, 11 March 2015, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/opinion/republican-idiocy-on-iran.html>.

⁵⁰³ Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 2–3.

millions in aid from wealthy pro-Israel Republican billionaires and other influential donors to help them win against their Democratic counterparts in their political campaigns in 2014.⁵⁰⁴ Cotton received \$960,000 from William Kristol, editor of the Weekly Standard and leader of the Emergency Committee for Israel as well as \$250,000 from Paul Singer, a New York hedge fund billionaire who supports pro-Israel causes.⁵⁰⁵ Even John Bolton, then America's ambassador to the United Nations under president Bush, together with other pro-Israel donors, donated \$825,000 to Senator Cotton to promote pro-Israeli policies, resulting in influences at the highest levels of government against the nuclear agreement with Iran.⁵⁰⁶ Nevertheless, it is not just Senator Cotton, but 46 Congressional Republicans that signed the letter to Iranian leaders and pro-Israel donors continued to influence members of Congress to oppose the nuclear deal with Iran.⁵⁰⁷ Although groups both supporting and opposing the nuclear deal have spent money in order for their specific goals to be achieved, those that opposed the deal have raised more money in comparison to those supporting it and those opposed were also far less transparent in disclosing the origins of their money.⁵⁰⁸

On the other side, some wonder if it were the multinational corporations that pressured president Obama in making a deal with Iran to open-up trade again.⁵⁰⁹ The signing of the deal and the subsequent gradual lifting of economic sanctions had a relatively insignificant effect on American businesses. In 2016, Airbus concluded a multimillion dollar deal with Iran to sell them their commercial planes and Boeing agreed to sell Iran some 140 planes with an overall cost of \$22.6 billion.⁵¹⁰ But, it is estimated that the American economy fulfilled an unimportant role in the future of the nuclear deal, arguing that it also had little influence on its construction.⁵¹¹ This is partly due to the fact that many other American businesses were still prohibited from doing business with Iran due to earlier sanctions placed in the 1990s over Iran's alleged support for

⁵⁰⁴ Eric Lipton, 'G.O.P.'s Israel Support Deepens as Political Contributions Shift', *The New York Times*, 4 April 2015, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/05/us/politics/gops-israel-support-deepens-as-political-contributions-shift.html>.

⁵⁰⁵ Lipton, 'G.O.P.'s Israel Support Deepens as Political Contributions Shift'.

⁵⁰⁶ Lipton.

⁵⁰⁷ Lipton.

⁵⁰⁸ Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 47.

⁵⁰⁹ Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 131.

⁵¹⁰ Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 168.

⁵¹¹ Jett, 169.

terrorist organisations.⁵¹² The oil and gas sectors in the United States, who might be in favour of a deal in order to resume trade with Iran, also proved less significant, as Iran's oil and gas sector did not see many major American investment after the implementation of the nuclear deal.⁵¹³

Among the most prominent efforts of track II diplomacy were international organisations seeking to alter America's foreign policy in regard to Iran and its nuclear programme. The National Iranian American Council (NIAC) recruited diplomats and among its leading members were John Limbert, the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran at the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and former hostage during the Iranian hostage crisis as well as Thomas Pickering, a former US ambassador to the United Nations.⁵¹⁴ NIAC started 'Campaign for a New Policy in Iran' and commissioned a research paper on how to continue the US-Iran nuclear relation, which concluded that the United States should offer Iran more benefits when adhering to the rules and regulations set-out instead of just punishment by sanctions and deterrence.⁵¹⁵ This group of former American diplomats and regional experts have met occasionally with their Iranian counterparts to discuss the most pressing issue regarding the US-Iran relation and Iran's nuclear programme.⁵¹⁶ The minutes of meeting from November 12th 2009 indicate that the group 'advocates a diplomatic resolution to the conflict between the US and Iran, opposes military actions against Iran, and agrees that sanctions are no substitute for diplomatic engagement.'⁵¹⁷ Apart from NIAC, other groups, such as the Liberal Jewish group called J Street, anti-war groups like Peace Action and the American Friends Service Committee and the business lobby, who are against the implementation of economic sanctions against Iran, such as USA*Engage, were active in this discussion.⁵¹⁸ These groups attempted to influence policy in regards to Iran by seeking to end the 'Democracy Fund' as to halt the funding of Iranian resistance groups and were actively engaged in attempts to stop the nomination of government

⁵¹² Jim Snyder and Ben Brody, 'For U.S. Businesses, It's Safer on the Sidelines of Iran Debate', Bloomberg, consulted on 31 May 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-15/for-u-s-businesses-it-s-safer-on-the-sidelines-of-iran-debate>.

⁵¹³ Indira A. r Lakshmanan, 'Inside the Plan to Undo the Iran Nuclear Deal', POLITICO Magazine, 15 July 2015, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/iran-nuclear-deal-foreign-policy-barack-obama-hassan-rouhani-javad-zarif-israel-john-kerry-214052>.

⁵¹⁴ Seliktar, *Navigating Iran*, 159.

⁵¹⁵ Seliktar, 159.

⁵¹⁶ Luers, Pickering, and Walsh, 'A solution for the US-Iran nuclear standoff', 2.

⁵¹⁷ Ben Smith, 'Documents Detail Iran Engagement Campaign', POLITICO, consulted on 24 May 2020, https://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/1109/Documents_detail_Iran_engagement_campaign.html.

⁵¹⁸ Smith.

officials such as Dennis Ross, special advisor for the Persian Gulf to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, whom they perceived as not the right pick for the job and thereby asserting significant influence on official policy.⁵¹⁹ Other influential persons whose involvement in track II dialogues are made public are former Secretary of Defense and high-level Obama official William Perry, former diplomat William Luers and three others who have later joined Obama's administration and held high-level positions there: Robert Einhorn, Gary Samore and Puneet Talwar.⁵²⁰ Talwar, as former White House National Security Staff Senior Director, was extensively involved in track II efforts and played a crucial role in both formal and informal aspects of diplomacy with Iran.⁵²¹ Pickering, Luers and James Walsh, all former American government officials, wrote a paper in 2008 on solutions to the US-Iran nuclear conflict and concluded that the United States should engage in negotiations with Iran in order to make its worries known, not to immediately strike a deal, but to at least achieve some mutual understanding of each other's concerns.⁵²² These three authors were also members of the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) project and published articles in line with what was discussed at the UNA-USA meetings.⁵²³ The UNA-USA is a programme of the UN foundation that seeks to inform, mobilise and inspire its members to engage in various track II initiatives to best represent America's interest in the United Nations.⁵²⁴ Also part of UNA-USA track II initiatives was Frank G. Wisner, former American ambassador on a variety of posts and former high-level government official under presidents Clinton and Bush, who made a statement before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate in which he stated that track II initiatives were regularly organised by UNA-USA and that their results were frequently shared with US government officials.⁵²⁵ Wisner's position that an American military response to Iran's nuclear efforts would be highly disruptive and lead to wider conflict in the region were in line with the statements of other high-level officials participating in track II dialogues.⁵²⁶ Wisner furthermore stated that the United States should seek to diplomatically engage with Iran in order to normalise their relation in a multilateral setting, but keep the economic and military options available as means to exert

⁵¹⁹ Smith, 'Documents Detail Iran Engagement Campaign.'

⁵²⁰ Jones, 'U.S.-Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 357.

⁵²¹ Allen e.a., 'Bridging Divides: Track II Diplomacy in the Middle East', 8.

⁵²² Luers, Pickering, and Walsh, 'A solution for the US-Iran nuclear standoff', 10.

⁵²³ Jones, 'U.S.-Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 358.

⁵²⁴ 'About UNA-USA', consulted on 28 May 2020, <http://www.unanca.org/una-usa>.

⁵²⁵ *Iran's Political/Nuclear Ambitions and U.S. Policy Options* (Washington: Committee on Foreign Relations, 2006).

⁵²⁶ *Iran's Political/Nuclear Ambitions and U.S. Policy Options*, 89.

pressure on Iran and force it to engage in negotiations.⁵²⁷ This is important, as two of the measurements of success for track II diplomacy are the participation of both retired and future high-level officials who are in close proximity to their political leaders as well as the transmission of acquired knowledge to those leaders.⁵²⁸ However, what makes the assessment on the success of track II initiatives troublesome is that a far larger quantity of influential individuals have participated in track II diplomatic initiatives and dialogues but whose identities are not made public under the Chatham House Rule, which ensures that speakers can participate in discussion and express their views in private without the topic of discussion, the outcome, nor the names of the participants made public and in that way ensure continued debate on the topic.⁵²⁹

The Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs has striven towards a world free of nuclear weapons and other WMD's by organising track II dialogues centred around scientific and evidence based policy-making to support the wished-for developments in policy and for its efforts received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.⁵³⁰ Pugwash's Secretary General, Paolo Cotta-Ramusino, stated in regards to the nuclear talks between the United States and Iran that the Pugwash Conferences have always been supportive towards the mediated talks to reach the nuclear deal and that Pugwash has created an environment for discussion from all sides in their various track II efforts in order to promote the commitments between Iran and the rest of the world and find the solutions to existing issues.⁵³¹ Cotta-Ramusino furthermore argued, in line with other track II participants, that placement of economic sanctions to force Iran to the negotiating table would not provide a positive outcome in the long term and that the threat of military action against Iran would certainly be a catastrophe.⁵³² There is need for extensive communications through third-party-intermediaries or track II initiatives to bring together American and Iranian high-level officials.⁵³³ This is especially important in case two countries with limited official diplomatic contacts who need to meet on a regular basis to avoid a rampant

⁵²⁷ *Iran's Political/Nuclear Ambitions and U.S. Policy Options*, 90-91.

⁵²⁸ Jones, 'U.S.-Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 356-57.

⁵²⁹ 'Chatham House Rule', Chatham House, consulted on 28 May 2020, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule>.

⁵³⁰ 'Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs', Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, consulted on 28 May 2020, <https://pugwash.org/>.

⁵³¹ Pugwash, 'Statement on the Iran Nuclear Talks', *Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs* (blog), 2 April 2015, <https://pugwash.org/2015/04/02/statement-on-the-iran-nuclear-talks/>.

⁵³² Pugwash.

⁵³³ 'The Urgent Need for a U.S.-Iran Hotline', 6.; 'Preventing War. Shaping Peace.', Crisis Group, 7 July 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/who-we-are>.

clash between them, according to the International Crisis Group, an independent organisation seeking to prevent wars and influence policies towards a more peaceful world.⁵³⁴

The Cooperative Monitoring Center at the Sandia National Laboratories in the United States together with the Verification Research, Training and Information Center organised a track II meeting on how to nationally realise nuclear, chemical and biological weapons agreements in Aman in 2006, at which representatives of Iran were present and which proved to be one of the first instances in which a move away from the traditional Arab-Israeli conflict towards other regional issues was made.⁵³⁵ Next to this, the Dubai based think-tank Gulf Research Center (GRC) has focused on realising a Middle East without Weapons of Mass Destruction through its Gulf Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone (GWMDZ) initiative, which has held conferences since 2004 and in which Iran has participated alongside the members of the GCC, Iraq and Yemen.⁵³⁶ Mustafa Alani, Senior Advisor and Middle East Security consultant and Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies (RUSI) has stated that, due to the work of the GRC and its GWMDZ programme through track II initiatives, the terminology “a Gulf free from WMD” has been widely adopted and even used in official policy statements.⁵³⁷ The Stanley Foundation together with the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA) have since 2004 sponsored track II diplomatic workshops regarding security related issues in the Gulf region.⁵³⁸ Its meeting in Oman in 2006 specifically addressed the Iranian nuclear issues and was attended by various Iranians.⁵³⁹ Today the Foundation focuses on increasing the quantity of bi- and trilateral meetings between the Gulf states, Iran and the United States to enhance the efforts of solving the ongoing security issues and promote the determination of regional actors.⁵⁴⁰ Other international and non-governmental organisations such as the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), the Global Observatory and its publisher the International Peace Institute (IPI), the World Nuclear Association, the Arms Control Association, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control have all engaged in track II diplomacy initiatives in

⁵³⁴ ‘The Urgent Need for a U.S.-Iran Hotline’, 6.

⁵³⁵ Kaye, ‘Regional Security Dialogues in the Middle East’, 44–45.

⁵³⁶ Kaye, 52.

⁵³⁷ Mustafa Alani, ‘The Gulf NW and WMD free zone: A Track II initiative’, *International Relations* 22, nr. 3 (2008): 358.

⁵³⁸ Kaye, ‘Regional Security Dialogues in the Middle East’, 50.

⁵³⁹ Kaye, 51.

⁵⁴⁰ Kaye, 51.

regards to nuclear non-proliferation and the Iran nuclear deal, ranging from op-eds, research reports and academic papers to hosting conferences, discussions, workshops and more, to assert influence on official policy in regards to the Iranian nuclear deal. However, none of the participants in track II initiatives anticipated the final shape of the nuclear deal a hundred percent correctly, but the idea that a deal was possible is attributed to their efforts.⁵⁴¹

There were also prominent anti-deal organisations in the United States, such as the Republican Jewish Coalition, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Zionist Organisation of America, Christians United for Israel, Endowment for Middle East Truth, Israeli American Council, United Against Nuclear Iran and the World Values Network, which many rich Americans used to express their opposition to the nuclear deal and invested money in an attempts to influence the outcome of the negotiations.⁵⁴² In the anti-deal camp, the most powerful group in terms of financial and political outreach is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which had a budget of \$89 million in 2015 to exert its influence on foreign policy and the Iran nuclear deal and has some 100,000 members, a part of whom come together at the annual conference, attracting American politicians and other high-level officials.⁵⁴³ AIPAC furthermore created a group called Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran, which is solely occupied with countering any nuclear deal and applying pressure on American politicians to dismiss any such deals.⁵⁴⁴ However, those opposed to the deal and not just critical of certain aspects often do so due to the ideological convictions that a deal with Iran was never a solution and is under no circumstance possible.⁵⁴⁵

The IAEA announced in 2010 that it had evidence that Iran continued its nuclear programme after 2004, which raises some questions about the effectiveness of these track II initiatives.⁵⁴⁶ It is difficult to measure whether or not an idea or policy discussed during a track II meeting, conference or other initiative has directly influenced official policy.⁵⁴⁷ Nevertheless, track II diplomacy can prove effective. In 2006, the Gulf dialogues, organised by the Stanley Foundation, resulted in a former high-level Iranian official arguing that the geopolitical system based on a balance of power and hegemony should be replaced by a focus towards a more

⁵⁴¹ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁵⁴² Jett, *The Iran Nuclear Deal*, 51–55.

⁵⁴³ Jett, 71.

⁵⁴⁴ Jett, 72.

⁵⁴⁵ Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁵⁴⁶ Pollack, *Unthinkable*, 52.

⁵⁴⁷ Kaye, ‘Regional Security Dialogues in the Middle East’, 65.

cooperative sphere in which various regional actors could participate, directly incorporating various ideas that originated through the Stanley Foundation's track II workshops and publications.⁵⁴⁸ This is not remarkable, as even though track II diplomacy occurs in an unofficial setting, those that engage in track II diplomacy do often have access to decision-makers in their respective societies and governments.⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, track II efforts, even if it is not expected that they will always produce an immediate major breakthrough such as the nuclear deal, do have shown to be able to create a path for official negotiations to take place between counterparts with limited or non-existing relationships by sharing and testing ideas in a safe environment.⁵⁵⁰ Subsequently, in 2014, many track II practitioners believed that, if a nuclear deal was established through track I negotiations, then track II dialogues had enabled that by laying the groundwork for the political and diplomatic negotiations.⁵⁵¹ Enabling discussion on certain issues already is a track II success, even as a direct line to changes in policy is hard to pinpoint.⁵⁵² As former Secretary of State under Obama and America's top negotiator on the nuclear deal, John Kerry said that the ideas and initiatives provided by track II dialogue's on nuclear related issues had helped the government on a specific aspect of the nuclear issue regarding Iranian heavy water reactors, indicating that track II initiatives can prove fruitful.⁵⁵³ The continued advice to abstain from a military response has so far been successful and official negotiations and rapprochement efforts instead of mere economic sanctions have also occurred, indicating that track II diplomatic efforts have indeed, to some extent, influenced the highest levels of government in regards to the Iran nuclear deal.

Therefore, even as the influence of track II diplomacy is hard to empirically measure, it can be concluded that it did influence the nuclear deal with Iran. Many ideas and policy discussions were transmitted from track II initiatives to the highest levels of government and many track II practitioners were actively engaged with the nuclear deal in Obama's government. Track II has also shown that, throughout the world, various track II initiatives originated with the goal of promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and in that spirit have sought to steer official policy towards that goal.

⁵⁴⁸ Kaye, 'Regional Security Dialogues in the Middle East,' 67.

⁵⁴⁹ Jones, 'U.S.-Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 349.

⁵⁵⁰ Randa M. Slim, *The US-Iran Track II Dialogue (2002–2008): Lessons Learned and Implications for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Grantmaking Strategy* (Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 2010), 22.

⁵⁵¹ Jones, 'U.S.-Iran Nuclear Track Two from 2005 to 2011', 364.

⁵⁵² Peter Jones, Interview on Track II Diplomacy with Professor Peter Jones, Zoom, 1 June 2020.

⁵⁵³ Wertz, 'Track II Diplomacy with Iran and North Korea', 7.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

The nuclear relationship between the United States and Iran has a turbulent past full of cooperation, but also of animosity and obstinacy. Exchanges and contacts concerning nuclear technologies started under Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace programme to counter Soviet and Chinese influences. The Shah's support from the United States and personal interest in the creation of a nuclear sector enabled Iran's vast nuclear development. This period experienced increased cooperation and led to America constructing nuclear facilities and sharing technologies predominantly in the 1970s, as Iran became signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and had to abide by the IAEA safeguards. America became more involved in Middle Eastern security issues and for years saw Iran as a reliable ally in the region. As Iran's nuclear and regional ambitions grew, dependence on American support decreased, resulting in mounting tensions and distrust on both sides by the end of the 1970s.

Growing tensions in Iran climaxed in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution, in which the American-backed Pahlavi monarchy was overthrown and Iran turned into an Islamic Republic, led by Ayatollah Khomeini. The United States were caught unprepared by this regime change and lacked a policy response to these events. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, all diplomatic connections between the countries were severed and economic sanctions were placed on Iran. Iran revived its nuclear ambitions in the late 1980s, as advocates of nuclear energy within the government and security forces convinced the Ayatollah of its potential. The war with Iraq further strengthened Iranian sentiment that nuclear weapons were needed to secure its own future. By this time, Iran moved closer to Pakistan, who provided Iran with nuclear materials and know-how, as well as the Soviet Union, who deployed advisor and nuclear scientists to Iran. Furthermore, the Soviet Union saw the diminishing influence of the United States as a chance to spread its own regional influence and became more involved after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia signed deals with Iran to work on multiple nuclear power plants. The IAEA still conducted investigations into alleged breaches of the safeguard agreements but did not uncover any in this period. Ayatollah Khamenei took over in 1989 and was determined to dispose Iran of all foreign influences and disregarded any American attempt to discuss its nuclear programme. During the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, efforts were made to initiate a dialogue in which Iran would disregard its nuclear aspirations in return for the lifting of economic sanctions. Nevertheless, President Clinton forbade all trade between the countries in 1995 and penalised Iran's energy sector and subsequent restrictions were imposed on individuals and companies involved in Iran's nuclear sector. The crippling of Iran's economy later led to increased calls for

reconciliation with the US. The lack of official diplomatic contacts made any approach to discuss Iran's nuclear issues tough, but opened up the stage for track II initiatives.

By the beginning of the 2000s, Iran had managed to advance its ballistic missile technology and complete its own nuclear fuel cycle. Tensions between the United States and Iran grew once more under the leadership of President Ahmadinejad, who rejected rapprochement efforts led by the European Union and hinted at Iran's goal of creating a nuclear weapon. President Bush's War on Terror, invasions in the Middle East and unilateral foreign policy troubled constructive nuclear diplomacy. The United States disregarded Iranian offers of de-escalation and argued they be submitted to the IAEA. The presidency of Rouhani from 2013 onwards finally saw the start of constructive nuclear talks, but these were aborted due to a Stuxnet attack targeting Iran's nuclear programme and the subsequent assassination of five Iranian nuclear scientists. President Obama, who argued in favour of unrestricted diplomatic talks with Iran initially attempted to continue with the sanctions on Iran, but later focused on efforts of arms control.

The main actors involved in track II diplomacy have been varied and of significant importance. Scholars and academics were actively engaged with track II initiatives through university organised dialogues, such as Columbia University's Gulf/2000 project and the UCLA's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation's annual conference, or as part of events of other organisations and institutions. The most influential organisations in track II diplomacy have been the National Iranian American Council and the United Nations Association of the United States of America, whose members consisted of various former and future diplomats and government officials who had access to the highest levels of government and could therefore exert influence on the outcome of the nuclear deal. The Stanley Foundation, in cooperation with INEGMA, conducted track II efforts on regional security issues in the Gulf and in 2006 hosted Iranian officials to discuss the country's nuclear issues and continued to host bi- and trilateral meetings with Iran and the United States. Furthermore, other organisations, such as the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the World Nuclear Association, the Arms Control Association and the International Peace Institute have added to the debate by hosting conferences, discussions, workshops and wrote academic and policy papers to express their views on the nuclear relation with Iran and in that way attempted to influence the deal. The role of multinational corporations and overall business interests in track II initiatives have proven of limited influence, as already existing economic penalties, originating from earlier sanctions placed on Iran over its support for terrorist organisations and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, were in place and no major American investments can be observed immediately after the implementation of the nuclear deal.

Those opposed to the nuclear deal were mostly found in pro-Israel lobby groups whose influence on the deal has proven limited, but who, in hindsight, have gotten what they wanted: American withdrawal.

So, how has track II diplomacy affected the bilateral relations between the US and Iran in regard to the 2015 nuclear agreement? The efforts of track II diplomacy, which have been present in the Middle East since the Cold War, were crucial in understanding the developing efforts to influence Iran's nuclear programme. Track II initiatives have improved communications regarding regional arms control and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Evaluating these efforts is not easy, as the results, as well as the participants of many such initiatives are kept secret under the Chatham House Rules in order to provide the attendees a safe environment for discussion. Nevertheless, their effectiveness can still be measured, although not empirically. Track II dialogues often featured former high-level government officials and those that would thereafter occupy important positions in the Obama administrations and be part of the delegation negotiating the nuclear deal. There existed a familiarity of government officials on both sides due to their participation in track II initiatives, which ensured better cooperation and understanding of each other's perspectives. Furthermore, much of what was discussed in track II dialogues found its way to government officials, due to the high-level positions and contacts of those involved. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to indicate a clear line between a track II initiative and a specific change in policy and there was little cooperation between the numerous different track II efforts. However, it should be stated with certainty that track II diplomacy has aided the efforts towards a nuclear deal by popularising the idea that a nuclear deal was possible in the first place and discussing its potential and probable structure. The various track II dialogues lay the groundwork for the subsequent track I diplomatic dialogues and thus successfully accommodated the major global powers in their efforts towards regional stability, safety and a diminished nuclear threat.

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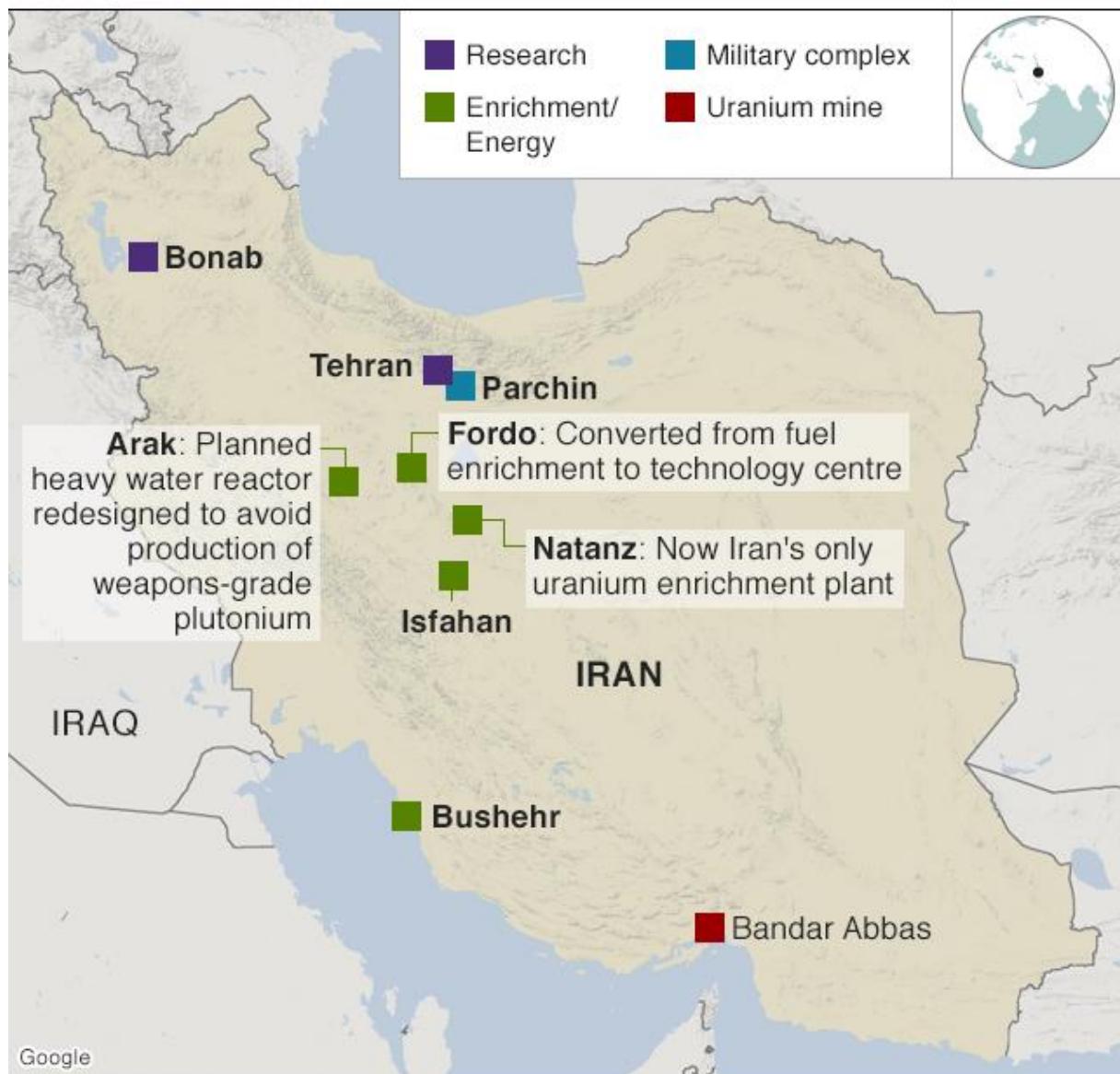
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Appendix

Map of Iranian nuclear facilities

Changes agreed under Iran deal to limit nuclear programme



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