

US Foreign Policy towards Iranian Nuclear Deal: Comparative Analysis of Obama and Trump Administration



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Abstract

Iranian nuclear threat is one of the most contentious issues in US foreign policy as it poses significant threats to US interests in the Middle East. The US objective is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon but each US administration came up with their own set of policies. There have been various factors that play an important role in foreign policy decision making. However, the process of determining the US foreign policy has some serious consequences impacted by the change from the Obama administration to the Trump administration. The direct engagement policy of Obama was replaced by a maximum pressure policy that appears to be preparing to impress with a more rigorous approach to foreign affairs that ultimately turned the US into an isolationist state. The aim of this study is to investigate the factors behind the inconsistency in the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal from President Obama to Trump presidencies. By using the qualitative research methodology, this study has analyzed the role of the domestic factors along with leaders' perception and their personalities that bring inconsistency in the foreign policy from Obama to the Trump administration.

Keywords: JCPOA agreement, internal factors, Iranian nuclear deal, US foreign policy, Iranian nuclear Deal

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List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NSS	National Security Strategy
US	United States
UN	The United Nations
WMDs	Weapons of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every state aims to maximize its power in this anarchic world in order to ensure its survival. As a result, states try to increase their security as much as they can by acquiring maximum power so they can respond to the threats that could endanger their security. To achieve security, global powers must aim for global hegemony and take the required steps in response to any state that challenges or rejects their hegemony. With the end of the cold war and disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world has been changed from bipolar to unipolar with the US as a sole superpower. Over the last century, the US has extensively engaged in various regions of the world in order to retain its hegemony. According to the National Security strategy (NSS) of 1994, since the cold war ended, the prime objective of the US has been to remain involved globally in order to influence the international security environment. If we analyze security strategies over the preceding decades, we find that its strategic objectives have remained consistent.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the major threat that the US has been facing is the development of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the most serious existential threat to mankind as well as the greatest threat to international peace. Every state desired to possess a nuclear weapon, which led to a race for nuclear weapons among states for reasons of power, security and survival. Nuclear-armed states and their allies do not want any other states to get this capability, but those who are threatened by or hostile to these states (or any other states) frequently desire to do so. However, one of the states that has drawn the most attention and frequently generated the greatest fervor over countermeasures to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons is the US. A major national security strategic goal of the United States is to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and lessen the threat they pose to the rest of the world.¹ The US has devoted major attention to the problem of proliferation,

¹ "National Nuclear Security Administration", US Department of Energy <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/nonproliferation#:~:text=NNSA's%20Office%20of%20Defense%20Nuclear,equipment%2C%20technology%2C%20and%20expertise>. Accessed on October 20th, 2022.

efforts to date have dealt with export control.² Since the days of President Truman, every US administration has made a specific commitment to achieving non-proliferation. Each US administration has made an effort to leave its own distinct mark on the nation's nuclear non-proliferation strategy, whether by enabling the signing of relevant treaties, winning the support of the greatest number of nations, or via other unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral actions.³

Unfortunately, these nonproliferation efforts have not solved the proliferation problems. The states that want nuclear weapons will find ways to get them. Therefore, US nuclear policy focuses on how to achieve US national security objectives in future scenarios where states with weapons of mass destruction pose a threat. US nuclear policy and strategy have been in a state of evolution since 1945.⁴ Following that, promises on nuclear non-proliferation have been obtained from other nations in an effort to stop proliferation, which can jeopardize international peace and security.⁵ From 1993 through the most recent US national security plan, published in 2022, among the top global priorities of the US foreign policy is to restrict, minimize, and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other hazardous weapons from all around the globe.^{6,7}

² Richard A. Paulsen, Maj USAF, "The Role of US Nuclear Weapons in the Post-Cold War Era," Air University Press", published in September 1994
https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/b_0058_paulsen_role_nuclear_weapons.pdf accessed on October 20th, 2022.

³ Manpreet Sethi, "US Pursuit of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Check and Checkmate", Strategies Analysis: A Monthly Journal of the IDSA https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_99sem04.html accessed on October 20th, 2022.

⁴ Richard A. Paulsen, Maj USAF, "The Role of US Nuclear Weapons in the Post-Cold War Era," Air University Press", published in September 1994
https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/b_0058_paulsen_role_nuclear_weapons.pdf accessed on October 20th, 2022.

⁵ Manpreet Sethi, "US Pursuit of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Check and Checkmate", Strategies Analysis: A Monthly Journal of the IDSA https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_99sem04.html accessed on October 20th, 2022.

⁶ Douglas Little, "View point on Modern History: US-Iran Relation" *Greenhaven publishing* pg. no.18 published in 2018
https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=YHtmDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=US-iran+relations+history+pdf&ots=xY6m1Rrn5U&sig=eZzdWsp8DKOozBExtg6BGIhpc-I&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false accessed on December 23, 2021.

⁷ "National Security Strategy 2022" p.g. no 29 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf> accessed on October 21st, 2022.

Iranian nuclear threat has become the most controversial issue in US foreign policy. For over three decades, one of the top priorities of US national security is to stop Iran from acquiring the nuclear weapons that can cause chaos and instability in the Middle East as well as endanger world peace and security. For more than a century, the US and Iran have had an ambiguous relationship. Throughout the 20th and 21st century, the US and Iran have clashed over matters ranging from oil to communism to extreme Islam to nuclear proliferation and frequently presenting their mutual hostility as a war of civilizations and barbarism.⁸

The Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran has deteriorated the relations between both the states because clergy had overthrown US partner and most trustable ally Reza Shah from power. Iran called the US as “Great Satan who shouted and gathered all devils that had started a ruckus against Iran” in return the US labeled Iran as “Axis of Evil”.⁹ In November 1979, the supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Khomeini stated that “We must go forward with power. If we show weakness, they will be emboldened and will attack.”¹⁰ Since then, Iran has advanced its nuclear program, most notably with the construction of the P-1 centrifuge in 1989. The suspicious activities of Iran in the region have posed a substantial threat to US security interests in the Middle East, particularly when Iran began to pursue its nuclear weapons goals. The US has adopted various strategies to stop Iran from the development of nuclear weapons. Iran and the US have a history of animosity that became a core reason for changes in US foreign policy toward Iran's nuclear program.

Each US administration has the same objective of curbing Iranian nuclear program but they all came up with their own set of policies ranging from putting international pressure, imposing destructive sanctions, military strikes and diplomatic means. The US is concerned that if Iran continues to increase its ballistic missile arsenal, it will not only

⁸ ibid

⁹ Anak agung banyu Perwita, "U.S. Foreign Policy towards Iranian Nuclear Threat from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump Administration" *Journal of International Relations* published in April 2020 https://www.academia.edu/43182177/U_S_Foreign_Policy_Towards_Iranian_Nuclear_Threat_from_Bill_Clinton_to_Donald_Trump_Administration accessed on December 23, 2021.

¹⁰ Karim Sadjadpour, "Reading Khamenei: The World View of Iran's Most Powerful Leader", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* published in 2009 https://carnegieendowment.org/files/sadjadpour_iran_final2.pdf accessed on January 29th, 2014

threaten the US interest in the Middle East but its missiles will be capable of not just reaching US allies' borders, but also of being used as a delivery vehicle for nuclear weapons if it decides to create such a weapon.¹¹

Iran's enmity toward the US did not emerge suddenly, it is a product of several policies. The conflict between Iran and the US began in 1953, when the CIA along with Britain set up a coup to remove democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. The goal behind the coup was to depose Mosaddegh when he intended to nationalize oil. The reason behind declaring a coup against democratic elected prime minister was to support and strengthen the monarch rule of Reza Shah Pahlavi who was a puppet of the US. The US administration depended on ties with Iran and Saudi Arabia as a shield against the Soviet Union and as a guarantee for the secure supply of oil.¹² But the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and seizure of the US embassy deteriorated the relations between both the states and they remain inconsistent. The US accused Iran from sponsoring terrorism, support violence in various Middle Eastern states and pursuing weapon of Mass destruction (WMDs). The US foreign policy towards Iran did not turn fruitful, it was based on sanctions and coercion. Though it caused difficulty for Iran and its leadership, it did not force the dictatorship to modify its behavior. Instead Iranian leadership blamed sanctions for causing instability in Iran.¹³

The previous US administrations' objective was to overthrow Iran's Islamic regime, keep the threat of military force on the table and bring global improvement in a range of issues. Moreover, for years, the US has been negotiating with Iran, offering various incentives to stop uranium enrichment. But the US administration under President Obama was eager to strengthen the US relations with Iran; he opted for a different strategy towards Iran than his predecessors. Following his experiences in Afghanistan, and particularly in Iraq, he

¹¹ James R. Clapper, "Threat Assessment Statement for the Record Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, Senate Armed Services Committee." *Office of the Director of National Intelligence* published on January 29th, 2014 https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Intelligence%20Reports/2014%20WWTA%20%20SFR_SSCI_29_Jan.pdf, accessed on December 23, 2021.

¹² Rex Brynen, "Engaging Iran: The Rise of a Middle East Powerhouse and America's Strategic Choice", Research Gate published on 2007 Rex Brynen, "Engaging Iran: The Rise of a Middle East Powerhouse and America's Strategic Choice", Research Gate published on 2007 accessed on December 23, 2021.

¹³ *ibid*

shifted his approach away from using military force to convince undesirable governments to conform to Washington's goals or interests. As a result, Obama endeavored to reassure both the Iranian leadership and their citizens that the US goal was to engage Iran's leadership through diplomacy and multilateralism, not to fundamentally alter the nature Islamic Republic. He limited the talk to the topic of nuclear fuel enrichment in an effort to modify behavior. The Obama Doctrine's policy response to Iranian nuclear issues is the most prominent embodiment of the Obama Doctrine.¹⁴

When the Obama administration took office, one of its top foreign policy priorities was to address the Iran nuclear issue.¹⁵ According to him, Iran has the largest deployed missile arsenal in the Middle East ranging from the short to medium-range missiles which pose grave threat to US allies in the Middle East as well as also "are capable of reaching Europe."¹⁶

The fundamental goal was to de-escalate the Iranian nuclear capabilities so that in future whenever Iran decides to pursue its nuclear program, it will take at least a year that will allow great powers adequate time to respond. Prior to the nuclear deal discussions, the US intelligence agencies assessed that if P5+1 states did not succeed in signing a nuclear agreement with Iran then it would just take a few months for Iran to develop the nuclear program. If that happened, the entire Middle East would be thrown into a new catastrophe.¹⁷ Israel had conducted preemptive military actions against nuclear installations in Syria and Iraq and there might be chances that it would again conduct military strikes against Iran, perhaps provoking retaliation from Lebanon's Hezbollah or disrupting oil shipments in the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has shown a

¹⁴ Amin Tarzi, "Iran's Nuclear Deal And the 'Obama Doctrine'- Analysis" *Foreign policy research institute*, published on March 16, 2016, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/03/irans-nuclear-deal-obama-doctrine-analysis/> accessed on December 22, 2021.

¹⁵ ADL "The Iranian Nuclear Threat: Why it Matters", <https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/the-iranian-nuclear-threat-why-it-matters> accessed on December 23rd, 2021.

¹⁶ "Remarks by the President on Strengthening Missile Defense in Europe", *The White House*, published on September 17th, 2009, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-Strengthening-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/ accessed on December 23rd, 2021.

¹⁷ Kali Robinson, Council on Foreign Relation, "What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>, accessed on December 25th, 2021.

willingness to get a nuclear weapon if Iran successfully detonates one which ultimately not just destabilized the region but also hurt the US interest.

In July 2014, P5+1 signed a nuclear deal with Iran also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). After 20 months of discussions, the deal was achieved, establishing provisions that would drastically curtail Iranian nuclear program for 10 to 15 years in exchange for the removal of sanctions against Iran.¹⁸ Under this agreement, Iran pledged not to manufacture plutonium and highly enriched uranium that are used in the development of nuclear weapons. Additionally, it made an attempt to ensure that its facilities at Arak, Natanz and Fordow were mainly used for peaceful means, mostly in industrial and medical research. The deal limits Iran's ability to employ a certain number and kind of centrifuges, as well as a particular amount of enrichment and the size of its stockpile of enriched uranium.¹⁹ Former US President Obama described the JCPOA as his most significant diplomatic achievement since Iran was considered to be months away from acquiring enough highly enriched uranium to construct one nuclear bomb. This JCPOA agreement obliged Iran to accept constraints on its enrichment program verified by an intensive inspection regime in return for a partial lifting of economic sanctions. The deal got off to a good start. The IAEA verified in early 2016 that Iran had met its preliminary requirements, and the US, EU, and UN responded by lifting or suspending sanctions. Most notably, Iran was able to increase its oil exports to nearly pre-sanction levels after Obama's government relaxed secondary oil industry limitations. The US and numerous European states unfroze Iranian assets worth about \$100 billion.²⁰

However, the deal was opposed by the Republican opposition in the US, and it was put to a blocking vote in Congress in September 2015. Donald Trump was a strong opponent of the deal throughout his presidential campaign in 2016. At times, he vowed to pursue

¹⁸ Gray Samore "*The Iran Nuclear Deal, A Definitive Guide*" published August 2015
<https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/IranDealGuide2017.pdf> accessed on December 23, 2021.

¹⁹ Kali Robinson, Council on Foreign Relation, "*What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?*"
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal>, accessed on December 25th, 2021.

²⁰ *ibid*

renegotiation, severe enforcement of its conditions on Iran, or its abolition.²¹ By the beginning of 2018, the Trump administration's attitude toward the JCPOA had become increasingly hostile. They claimed that the JCPOA does not fulfill the aim of a nuclear-free Iran; it just postpones their desire to establish a nuclear state.²² President Trump announced the US's withdrawal from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018 and re-impose devastating sanctions that had been suspended under the nuclear deal.²³

Trump administration had given various reasons such as the development of ballistic missiles, efforts to destabilize neighbors, or support for terrorism to justify their withdrawal from the nuclear deal.²⁴ Trump wanted to renegotiate certain terms of the deal that would restrict Iran's ability to build ballistic missiles and its involvement in regional conflicts. Iran, on the other hand, rejected and saw its economy collapse due to sanctions as a result Iran began to violate the deal's terms. Its enriched uranium stockpile is now several times greater than allowed; a portion of it is barely below the quality required for a weapon, and hundreds of sophisticated centrifuges are whirling.

1.1 Research Gap

The literature on international relations today is replete with discussion on US foreign policy toward Iran. The study of US foreign policy, which focuses on the domestic forces that influence it, hasn't always gotten the attention it requires in the field of foreign policy, though. However, domestic variables have been more relevant in foreign policy study in recent decades, owing to their ability to evaluate the foreign policy decision-making process within a state. In addition, there is little literature on US foreign policy that

²¹ FRANÇOIS NICOULLAUD, Lobe Log, "Can The Iran Deal Survive A US Withdrawal?", published on November 16, 2016 <https://lobelog.com/can-the-iran-deal-survive-a-us-withdrawal/>, accessed on December 24, 2021.

²² Peter Baker, The New York Times, "Trump Recertifies Iran Nuclear Deal, but Only Reluctantly", published on July 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/17/us/politics/trump-iran-nuclear-deal-recertify.html>, accessed on December 2021.

²³ PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDA "Ceasing U.S. Participation in the JCPOA and Taking Additional Action to Counter Iran's Malign Influence and Deny Iran All Paths to a Nuclear Weapon" published on May 8, 2018, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/ceasing-u-s-participation-jcpoa-taking-additional-action-counter-irans-malign-influence-deny-iran-paths-nuclear-weapon/>, accessed on December 24, 2021

²⁴ Peter Baker, The New York Times, "Trump Recertifies Iran Nuclear Deal, but Only Reluctantly", published on July 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/17/us/politics/trump-iran-nuclear-deal-recertify.html>, accessed on December 2021.

discusses the domestic factors that have influenced the US foreign of each administration towards Iranian nuclear issue. The domestic factors that affect the foreign policy decision making process are still understudied.

1.2 **Problem Statement**

The US has signed various treaties in order to fight the common objective with the aim of preventing nuclear weapons proliferation and reducing the threat of Weapons of mass destruction around the world. The US under the presidency of Obama played a leading role to inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons by engaging countries, however, marked a diversion from Donald J. Trump's preferred harsh stance towards Iran by withdrawing from the JCPOA deal. This thesis's main supposition is that the US has pursued an inconsistent and dualistic foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal. The US foreign policy has been inconsistent from Obama to Trump administration due factors that have influenced that foreign policy of both Presidents resulted in change. This paper examines the internal factors along with the influence of contradicting perceptions and personalities of both the presidents and their targeting efforts, bringing the shift in the behavior of foreign policy.

1.3 **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that led President Obama to sign a nuclear deal with Iran and how its impact the US-Iran relations under the Obama presidency?
2. Why did a shift occur in US foreign policy toward Iranian nuclear deal under President Trump and its implications on US-Iran relations?
3. If we compare, on what grounds do the foreign policies of both presidents differ in curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions?

1.4 **Research Objective**

- The aim of this study is to have a comprehensive knowledge about the foreign policy approach of Obama and Trump focusing on the Iran nuclear deal as a case study through comparative study.
- To find the factors which underpinned the inconsistency in foreign policy of both the US Presidents towards Iran and how the relations between both the states evolved from one administration and the other.
- To examine the two US presidents' ideological backgrounds along with their contradicting perceptions towards the Iran nuclear threat and how they adapted their strategies to combat that nuclear threat.

1.5 **Significance of study**

The study is a comparative study of US President Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump in their foreign policy approach towards Iran. The research will explain how important these approaches were in the foreign policy administrations of the two previous presidents. Nonetheless, the research draws some lessons from this agreement and adds references to other US foreign policy examples where required. For comparison, the foreign policy challenges under the Obama and Trump administrations under Biden are also taken into account, where applicable.

The study is particularly essential since both of these presidents have strong stances toward Iran. Therefore, it is important to assess their foreign policies to comprehend how each of them carried out their individual foreign policies. In addition, this study provides a possibility to add to the body of literature because there is so little information available that compares these presidents' actions toward Iran, particularly the JCPOA.

1.6 **Hypothesis and Variables**

Hypothesis

Hypothesis is the educational guess or assessment about what will happen in the study. Researchers purposely formulate hypotheses in order to set a valid foundation to start research.

A directional hypothesis identifies the anticipated path to be taken in order to establish the direction of the relationship between the variables. This form of hypothesis is developed from theory and also conveys the academic dedication of the researcher to a certain result. The Domestic factors of the US during the presidency of both the presidents are the prime reasons for change and inconsistent in the US foreign policy towards JCPOA deal.

Variable

In this research, the independent variables (IV) are the domestic environment (factors) and the dependent variable is the US foreign policy toward Iran, special regard to Iran's nuclear program.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature review

This chapter is divided into main sections, the first section is based on theoretical framework in which I have discussed the old versions of realisms and explained how neo classical realism is the most suitable theory for my study and how helpful it is to understand the factors that can have a strong influence on state foreign policy as we as I have also applied the Polyheuristic Theory of Decision-Making as a Foreign policy Analysis approach in order to allow a better understanding of U.S. foreign policy decision making outcome towards Iran under both US presidents. The second section is based on the literature review in which I have mentioned the research articles, journals, president speeches, and their national security strategies in order to have a better understanding of inconsistency in the US foreign policy.

Foreign Policy

In order to analyze and compare foreign policies of both US presidents it is important to first understand and define the foreign policy. Scholars have defined the foreign policy in various ways but generally it is defined as set of behavior, strategies and tactics that a state adopts in order to interact with other states in international arena.²⁵ Hermann defined foreign policy as “the discrete purposeful action that results from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals. It is the observable artifact of a political level decision. It is not the decision, but a product of the decision.”²⁶

George Modelski, defines it as “the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Foreign policy must throw light on the ways states attempt to change, and succeed in changing the behavior of other states.” As the primary aims of

²⁵ Sheriff Folarin, " Student Feature – Foreign Policy", *E-International Relation*, published December 20th, 2017 <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/12/20/student-feature-foreign-policy/#:~:text=Scholars%20have%20described%20foreign%20policy,states%20in%20the%20international%20system> accessed May 14th, 2022.

²⁶ Margaret G. Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, "Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Inquiry", *Jstor*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600518>, accessed on March 20th, 2022.

foreign policy, he recognized only those components of policy that attempt to influence present state behavior. However, foreign policy involves not just altering but also continuing to act in various ways at various times.²⁷

2.1 Foreign policy Analysis

The cold war and behavior revolution led to the emergence of Foreign policy Analysis style in the late 1950's. It is the study of how states, or the leaders who lead them, formulate, implement, and respond to the foreign policies of other states. Scholars and theorists wanted to make sense of state behavior and interactions.²⁸ Foreign policy analysis helps to understand how decision makers take rational decisions in formulating their states foreign policies in order to engage with other states and international institutions.

Foreign policy analysis focuses on the key aspects of foreign policy such as the objectives and goals of the state, the foreign policy instruments to achieve those objectives and interaction with other states. It analyzes the foreign policy of the state in a broader context which is defined by approaches and theories.²⁹

In the words of Padelford and Lincoln, "A State's Foreign Policy is the totality of its dealings with the external environment. Foreign Policy is the overall result of the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into specific courses of action in order to achieve its objectives and preserve its interests"³⁰

²⁷ Laura Neack, "The new foreign policy: power seeking in a globalized era" *Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers* published in 2020
https://www.academia.edu/45977232/Neack_L_2008_The_New_Foreign_Policy_Power_Seeking_in_a_globalized_era_Lanham_Rowman_and_Littlefield_Publishers accessed on March 20th, 2022.

²⁸ Philip B.K. Potter, "Methods of Foreign Policy Analysis", *International Studies*, published on March 1st, 2010
<https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-34> accessed on May 14th, 2022.

²⁹ Jackson, R. & Sorensen, G. "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" *Oxford University press*
[https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+Introduction+to+International+Relations:+Theories+and+Approaches.%E2%80%99\(4th+ed.\).&ots=UGUi0tWJ6F&sig=MrwTekJUWimAp4h6Kw91OPpXodo#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+Introduction+to+International+Relations:+Theories+and+Approaches.%E2%80%99(4th+ed.).&ots=UGUi0tWJ6F&sig=MrwTekJUWimAp4h6Kw91OPpXodo#v=onepage&q&f=false) accessed on May 14th, 2022.

³⁰ Naresh Chandra Roy "General: The Dynamics of International Politics By Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1962", *Sage Journal*, published on October 1, 1963 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/097492846301900405>, accessed on May 20th, 2022.

Scholars have studied the level of analysis to examine the behavior of the states. Level of analysis approach is quite a helpful approach in foreign policy analysis used by scholars in order to study and understand the state behavior. This approach was introduced by Kenneth Waltz whilst he was studying the causes of war by analyzing it at three different levels; the systemic, the state and the individual.³¹ The three level-of-analysis can help understand the state behavior and eventually foreign policy of the state are:

- Systemic Level of Analysis
- State Level of Analysis
- Individual Level of Analysis

System Level Analysis:

System level analysis is used to analyze any change in the international structure that will affect the state behavior and eventually bring change in the foreign policy of the state. The state behavior changes whenever there are any changes happening in the international system. In short we can say state behavior and the international system have a causal relationship.³²

State's power is the most essential and important variable in the international structure. The world is divided into two categories of states: powerful states and weak states. Although the world has been gradually moving from unipolar to multipolar with the emergence of regional powers like Russia, China and European states that are challenging the US hegemony but still the US holds the maximum power and controls the behavior of other states.

³¹ Waltz, K.N. (2001). "Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis." Columbia University Press https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=i6urAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Man,+the+State+and+War:+A+Theoretical+Analysis&ots=955ldpY7c8&sig=yDsBL7aBuzgi_ZpzjkaHhKest4#v=onepage&q=Man%2C%20the%20State%20and%20War%3A%20A%20Theoretical%20Analysis&f=false accessed on

³² Jackson, R. & Sorensen, G. "Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches" *Oxford University press* May 20th, 2022. [https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+Introduction+to+International+Relations:+Theories+and+Approaches.%E2%80%99\(4th+e+d.\).&ots=UGUi0tWJ6F&sig=MrwTekJUWimAp4h6Kw91OPpXodo#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+Introduction+to+International+Relations:+Theories+and+Approaches.%E2%80%99(4th+e+d.).&ots=UGUi0tWJ6F&sig=MrwTekJUWimAp4h6Kw91OPpXodo#v=onepage&q&f=false) accessed on May 14th, 2022.

Systemic level-of-analysis can be used in order to analyze the US foreign policy objectives with regards to combat the threat of the nuclear weapons. The US is the most powerful state, stretching its muscles to police the world against states that pose serious challenges to the US interest. The US wants to preserve its dominance and therefore crushes all challenges that can hinder the US in achieving its objectives. It uses its power in order to advance US interests and maintain its supremacy while also attempting to protect itself from other states that pose a danger to its peace and security. The US not only determines the behavior of other states but achieves its objective and in order to preserve the US interest, the US administration sometimes also brings change in the US foreign policy.

State Level Analysis

In state level analysis internal characteristics bring change in state behavior and eventually in its foreign policy. It regards the state as the most powerful actors in the international arena, therefore in order to analyze the state behavior it is important to look at the domestic factors like political structure, influential interest groups or important decision making actors.³³

The US has an objective to make the world nuclear free and therefore lays forth goals for foreign policy to accomplish such an objective. State level of analysis might explain that the inconsistency in the US foreign policy changed towards Iranian nuclear deal from the Obama to Trump administrations. The change in the US foreign policy is due to change in administrations. Both leaders have their own perception and mindset to stop Iran from developing the nuclear weapons or influence of the privileged interest groups on the US foreign policy.

Individual Level Analysis

In individual level analysis the main focus is on the individuals who are involved in decision making processes of the state. The policy-making process examines the perceptions, values, beliefs, ideology, choices and actions of the individuals to understand

³³ Jackson, R. & Sorensen, "Introduction to International relation theories and approaches", *Oxford University Press* p.g 233-237 published in 2010
[https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+\(2010\).&ots=UGUi0tNF4w&sig=Kam18G9nJk62xk6kBxWjibyXv0#v=onepage&q=Jackson%2C%20R.%20%26%20Sorensen%2C%20G.%20\(2010\).&f=false](https://books.google.com.pk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=FbNLEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Jackson,+R.+%26+Sorensen,+G.+(2010).&ots=UGUi0tNF4w&sig=Kam18G9nJk62xk6kBxWjibyXv0#v=onepage&q=Jackson%2C%20R.%20%26%20Sorensen%2C%20G.%20(2010).&f=false) accessed on December 23RD, 2022.

why they behave the way they do.³⁴ The individual level of analysis basically says that international events are caused by the actions of the specific individuals that are in power. For example President Nixon was an effective diplomat, during his presidency he opened up the US relations with China. This level-of-analysis can also be applied to both Obama and Trump. For example, it is the effective diplomacy of President Obama that he normalized the US relations with Iran after so long and he not just normalized the relations but also brought Iran to the negotiation table to sign a nuclear deal. Whereas in the case of Trump, his attitude to the JCPOA agreement and his stance to have the US withdraw from the agreement may be understood by looking at both his character and his ideology.

There are other ways to look at foreign policy analysis, but the two most common ones are the way decisions are made and the results of those decisions. The study will concentrate on the foreign policy results for the sake of this research. Such theories that are applicable to this analysis are neoclassical realism that will explain both domestic and international characteristics that bring change in state behavior and poliheuristic theory explains foreign policy by examining how leaders perceive the world.

Realism Theories

Realism theories are most commonly used in foreign policy analysis and widely recognized as the fundamental approaches of international relations theory. Realist theories are best to define the reality of international politics by emphasizing on the power and conflict relationship between the states. Despite this general feature, realism theories have sought many forms of explanation in order to evaluate conflict and war: selfish and greedy human nature, domestic politics or the key characteristics of the international arena are all important factors to consider.

2.2 Classical Realism

Classical realism in international relations was invented by British historian and political scientist E.H Carr and German political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau as an academic field to international relations during the interwar period of 1918 to 1939 in response to the

³⁴ Ibid

Utopian and idealist theories. These theorists drew on the concepts of ancient political theorists such as Thucydides, Niccol Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes. Despite not being regarded as members of the Modern classical realism school of thought, these political thinkers' work is significant to the expansion of the theory.

Classical realism, which emphasizes the role of domestic politics and human nature in explaining state behavior.³⁵ Classical realists have a pessimistic view of human behavior; it stresses that humans are inherently self-interested and power hungry whereas others believe that humans are fundamentally vicious, egoistic, and violent and cannot free themselves from the sinful fact that they are born to watch out for themselves. They contend that it is human nature that has a quest for power and desire to dominate others which resulted in state conflicts. According to them, humans cannot be changeable but it can be manageable by a higher authority enforcing law, like the state.³⁶ It is argued that human nature contains a desire for power, which motivates states to amass it whenever feasible.

According to classical realist theory, the state is the most important analytical unit and has more ontological significance than the international structure. Because there is no central authority to oversee the nations and adjudicate conflicts between them that in anarchy the international system. In this anarchic world, states begin to fear and mistrust each other and try to maximize their power to protect their sovereignty and ensure their survival.³⁷ If the international system is anarchic, there will be struggle for power among states which results in conflict. Thomas Hobbes is one of the prominent political philosopher who claimed, "It is a struggle for power "a war of all against all." However, sometimes states

³⁵ Jonathan Kirshner, "The Economic Sins of Modern IR Theory and the Classical Realist Alternative", *Cambridge University Press*, published on November 21, 2014, <https://www.istor.org/stable/24578341> accessed on May 10th, 2022.

³⁶ Jack Donnelly, "Realism and International Relations", *Cambridge University Press* published in 2000 <https://ir101.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Donnelly-2000-Realism-and-International-Relations.pdf> accessed on August 25th, 2022.

³⁷ Martin Griffiths, "Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relation", *London and New York* published on 1999 <file:///C:/Users/karso/Downloads/Griffiths,%2050%20Thinkers%20in%20IR.pdf> accessed on August 24th, 2022.

are motivated to desire power not just for the sake of security and survival, but also for fear, honor, and pride, or simply for the sake of power.³⁸

According to Hans Morgenthau human nature is to pursue one's own self-interest in a society where competition produces selfishness and conflict, the same way leaders will endeavor to enhance the national interest of the state, just as one would further one's personal self-interest. As a result, the behavior of state and leaders may be predicted since they are anchored in human nature.

2.3 Neo Realism

Neo realism was developed by Kenneth Waltz, he has a deep insight of classical realism and came to the conclusion that state behavior changes due to change in the anarchical international system. Neo realism emphasizes the international structure and capabilities of the great power that shapes the state's behavior. In other words, neo realists made an effort to explain world politics realistically through systemic level of analysis.

Neo-realists neglected the domestic factors, for example public opinion, interest groups, and the legislature that have a strong influence over the state's foreign policy. Moreover it overlooks the mindset and perceptions of the leader that play a crucial role in foreign policy of any state.

By using a more scientific approach, he sought to correct the flaws in past theories of international relations, particularly classical realism. Waltz refrained from assuming anything about human nature, morality, authority, and interest by focusing on the nature of the system-level structure. Neo realists viewed power in a very different way. They hadn't viewed power like classical realists as mean and an end. Neither had they assumed that states maximize their power because they want to dominate others or they have a lust for power. Instead Neo Realist believed states gain power to ensure their security and survival.

³⁸ Richard Ned Lebow, "The wisdom of classical realism" ", *Cambridge University Press* published on September, 22nd 2009 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/tragic-vision-of-politics/wisdom-of-classical-realism/4C840F6DA66CF20FE5F8D5836FFED7AB> accessed on August 25th, 2022.

2.4 Neo classical Realism

Neoclassical realism emerged when the old and reductionist theories of realism failed to explain state behavior and their impact on the foreign policy. Neoclassical realists argued, the neoclassical theory is not like other theories of international politics but it is a theory of foreign policy. Fareed Zakaria is a prominent neoclassical realist and is firm on this issue. He contends that theories of international politics differ in what they aim to explain. International politics theories explain international events between states by making assumptions about the perceptions of each state. A foreign policy theory is a whole distinct approach. It explains why states change their preference after a period of time and why states seek to accomplish different goals under comparable circumstances. Instead of explaining states motives based on assumption, foreign policy theory tends to explain state motivations.³⁹

Gideon Rose first used the term "Neo-classical realism" in a 1998 World Politics review article to describe the works of Christensen 1996, Schweller 1998, Wohlforth 1993, and Zakaria 1998. These scholars have emphasized the importance of both international and domestic factors in foreign policy decision making. All of these scholars made an effort to describe the security agenda and foreign policy of the major powers in their works. Gideon Rose incorporated the ideas of all these scholars in his 1998 review essay "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," which he labeled "neoclassical realism" and argued it had a cognitive relationship with classical realism.⁴⁰

Neo classical realism is a synthesis of classical and neo realism. Neoclassical realism principally seeks to explain foreign policy of the state by focusing on both international and national (domestic) levels and their complex relationship. Neoclassical realists

³⁹ Fareed Zakaria, "From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role" Princeton Studies in International History and Politics pg. 13-18 published on 1998 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347676447_From_Wealth_to_Power_The_Unusual_Origins_of_America's_World_Role_By_Fareed_Zakaria_Princeton_Princeton_University_Press_1998_199_pp accessed on August 18, 2022.

⁴⁰ Md Mahmudur Rahman, "A Review of Neo-Classical Realism and its Assessment of Independent and Intervening Variables in Foreign Policy Analysis", *A Review of Neo-Classical Realism and its Assessment of Independent and Intervening Variables in Foreign Policy Analysis*, published on October 19, 2022 <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1256508> accessed on August 26th, 2022.

modified and altered the tenets of classical and neo-realism to create a better theory in order to analyze the foreign policy of the state.⁴¹ In other words we can say that neoclassical realism is a theory that tries to fill the loopholes left by previous versions of realism, particularly in terms of foreign policy choices that have previously been difficult to explain and predict. Neoclassical realism has lately evolved into an "approach of foreign policy" that seeks to understand the behavior of the states in the international arena.⁴² So in order to understand how the change in international structure bring change to state behavior and ultimately to its foreign policy decision making, neo classical realist emphasized to pay attention to analytical strengths of both version of realism, the classical realism that primarily focused on unit level studies as well as neo realism that focuses on systematic level studies.⁴³

The neo realists considered both independent variables and dependent variables along with intervening factors that can influence the foreign policy of the state. For example Thucydides first time mentioned classical realism in his book “The History of the Peloponnesian War” where he highlighted that the main reason for war between Athena and Spartans was the feeling of fear among Spartan and Athena’s increasing power. So through this book he tried to explain how the domestic factor of the Greek city state of feeling of fear of losing balance of power and the international factor of losing the balance of power are equally important in understanding the foreign policy of any state.⁴⁴

Due to the reductionist outlook, earlier versions of realism had certain problems. For example, Classical Realism only emphasized on the unit level of analysis and ignored the systemic level of analysis whereas neo realism focused on the systemic level of analysis

⁴¹ Jalal Dehghani Firoozabadi and Mojtaba Zare Ashkezari, "Neo-classical Realism in International Relations", Canadian Center of Science and Education published on May 20, 2016 <file:///C:/Users/karso/Downloads/56775-211538-1-PB.pdf> accessed on August 26th, 2022.

⁴² Layla Ibrahim Abdallah Dawood, "Neo classical realism", Oxford Bibliographies, published on September 28th, 2016, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756223/obo-9780199756223-0187.xml#:~:text=Neoclassical%20realism%20is%20a%20theoretical,and%20conflictual%20relations%20among%20states.>, accessed on May 2nd, 2022

⁴³ Jalal Dehghani Firoozabadi and Mojtaba Zare Ashkezari, "Neo-classical Realism in International Relations", Canadian Center of Science and Education published on May 20, 2016 <file:///C:/Users/karso/Downloads/56775-211538-1-PB.pdf> accessed on August 26th, 2022.

⁴⁴ ibid

and completely ignored how domestic factors can impact the foreign policy of the state. The flaws in these theories that led to the development of the new theory known as neo classical realism theory. In contrast to neo realism, neo classical realists maintained that internal variables are just as essential as international factors in determining a state's foreign policy.⁴⁵ The foreign policies of one particular state frequently concentrated in historical accounts, attempting to explain the change in the international structure from internal factors of the state either from political instability or the idiosyncratic flaws of a particular leader, analyses by scholars often focuses on a particular policy.

Neo classical realism theory highlights not only the external factors but it also focuses on how, why and to what extent domestic factors and leader perceptions matter in shaping the foreign policy of the states. Neoclassical realism basically bridges a gap between classical realism and neo-realism arguing that international structure imposes some pressure on foreign policy of the states but unit level variables like the domestic factors and leader's perception and their personality are equally important in formulating the foreign policy objectives. Neoclassical realism is the outcome of foreign policy studies that look at both the internal dynamics of the domestic system and the structure of the global system.

If we talk about classical realism, Neo realists focus on the systemic level and go beyond the individual level of analysis. The characteristic that distinguishes neo-classical realists from other schools of realism is that it focuses on subjective and non-structural factors in addition to structural ones, such as leaders' views. They believed that although superpowers hold a significant importance their capabilities should be assessed in light of an anarchic system.

The old version of realism failed to answer the questions: how did the leaders assess between the risk and opportunities and under what circumstances the domestic variables prevent the leaders from formulating and implementing the strategies predicted by balance of power and balance of threat theories? These are some of the core research questions addressed by neoclassical realists, and understanding the varied and inconsistent foreign policy responses in order to have a better understanding of the concept of the state. The

⁴⁵ *ibid*

neoclassical realists argued, the relative material power of the state is the most important thing while setting the foreign policy objectives.

The neoclassical realist never rejects the importance of the systemic factors in foreign policy decision making.⁴⁶ This is in line with what Fareed Zakaria said: “a good account of a nation’s foreign policy should include systemic, domestic, and other influences, specifying what aspects of the policy can be explained by what factors”.⁴⁷ He argued that in order to understand the reason for inconsistency in the foreign policy it is important to analyze how the state behavior is influenced by the international structure. This is critical since every state functions within an anarchic world; hence, a state's capacity to pursue a successful foreign policy is heavily influenced by its material capabilities in comparison to its competitors. Starting with an evaluation of the material capability of the stage placed in the international structure also permits a theory to generalize across states. Generalizations, on the other hand, can only provide a partial explanation. According to the neo realist’s stance, by concentrating the theory's scope to a specific state and including more variables from lower levels of analysis, we might forfeit generality.⁴⁸ Hence, the best way to explain the foreign policy of the state is through inclusion of international variables along with domestic variables.

The theory of neoclassical realism always highlights that foreign policy is indirectly and deeply influenced by power capacities because international structure have a greater impact on state level for example, the political structure of the state. To understand the relationship between power and policy, it is important to analyze both the international and the domestic factors because foreign policy is formulated and implemented with all of these factors in mind.

⁴⁶ ibid

⁴⁷ Md Mahmudur Rahman, “A Review of Neo-Classical Realism and its Assessment of Independent and Intervening Variables in Foreign Policy Analysis”, *A Review of Neo-Classical Realism and its Assessment of Independent and Intervening Variables in Foreign Policy Analysis*, published on October 19, 2022 <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/1256508> accessed on August 26th, 2022.

⁴⁸ Fareed Zakaria, “From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role” Princeton Studies in International History and Politics pg 13-18 published on 1998 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347676447_From_Wealth_to_Power_The_Unusual_Origins_of_America's_World_Role_By_Fareed_Zakaria_Princeton_Princeton_University_Press_1998_199_pp accessed on August 18, 2022.

As per Gideon Rose domestic politics and conditions of states must be taken into account while analyzing drives of their behavior, and not just national interests and systemic factors. This allows irrational behavior. (Example: During the end of the Cold War). “Neoclassical Realism and theories of Foreign Policy, he presented a new vision for realist understanding of the world. Neoclassical realist’s primary objective is to understand how states foreign policies are shaped by the power dynamics in the international system, as well as their motives and domestic variables.⁴⁹

Neo classical realism accepts the phenomena that the foreign policy of the state is driven by both external and internal factors. International structure exists and affects the actions of the state but it does not always dictate the behavior of the state. It agree with the fact that the behavior of the state can be affected by the intervening systemic variables like the distribution of power capabilities among the states but it also shed a light on domestic and cognitive variable like elite, pressure groups, leaders biasness etc. that affect the power and freedom of action of the foreign policy decision-makers.

A huge number of domestic players are interested in international security policy in some way. If the government anticipates an electoral loss, a military takeover, or another type of de-selection may be impending, it will be far more inclined to strengthen its position by appeasing a strong interest group or the general public. Along with governmental vulnerability, the significance of domestic players should also be influenced by the levels of executive authority and national consensus over policy. There is minimal opportunity for domestic players with alternative objectives to influence policy decisions when the president makes decisions on the direction of national security policy. Similarly, when there is a national consensus, as there was for most of the Cold War, groups with opposing ideas have limited freedom to move. An independent executive is also more shielded from interest groups in general since they often have more access to and influence over the legislative than the executive.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Gideon Rose, “Neo Classical Realism and Theories of foreign policy”, Cambridge University published in 1998
https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/326196/mod_resource/content/1/Rose_Neoclassical%20realism%20and%20theories%20of%20foreign%20policy.pdf accessed on August 26th, 2022.

⁵⁰ ibid

Neoclassical realists assert that domestic factors have a significant impact on how the state perceives challenges and opportunities from outside and how it reacts to such challenges and chances.⁵¹ In this research, I have tried to analyze the domestic factors along with international factors that have an impact on foreign security policy as well as the regional and global settings in which they are most likely to do so. Domestic factors usually do not get the importance that need to be given to them. Majority of the time it is the domestic factors that have greater influence over the foreign policy decision making. Domestic factors also include some influential pressure groups that have an authority to even overthrow the leader or executive from office, they use their power to hinder the government's strategies that are not suitable to them, or alter the concept of national interests according to their favorability. The decision making process has been largely influenced by these actors, primarily when there are minimal threats from outside, when the leader has a fragile grip over the power, and when structural autonomy is absent from the national security executive. However, in general, domestic actors are much more likely to have an impact on the timing and character of a state's national security strategies than the determination of the national interest, which is usually determined from without, unless the state inhabits a stable environment.

According to neoclassical realism the domestic political processes serves as a transmission belt 'between structural incentives and constraints, on the one hand, and the actual diplomatic, military and foreign economic strategies states that states choose.'¹⁰³ If we analyze the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal under President Obama and Trump, there have been various international and domestic factors that have influenced the foreign policy of both the presidents. During Obama's presidency there were not just international structure such as Great depression, Middle Eastern crises that led him to brought change in the US foreign policy but there were various domestic factors for example excessive military spending resulted in weaken US economy, US losing its credibility all around the world, Iran's activities direct threats to US interests in the Middle East and along with this Obama was never in favor of harsh foreign policy. Since he was a democrat who always supports diplomacy over military actions and that's exactly what he

⁵¹ ibid

did in the case of Iran. By considering all factors he formulated a policy of direct engagement towards Iran and brought Iran to the negotiation table.

On the other hand, if we analyze Trump’s foreign policy, he did something completely opposite to what President Obama did. The decision making was not just influenced by the international environment but there has been a lot of internal pressure like the role of the Israel lobby along with his own mindset of “Make America great again” and “America First” were some domestic factors that led to a shift in the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal.

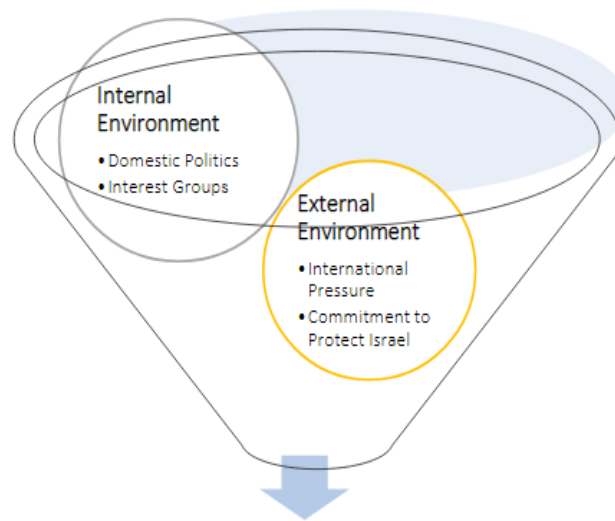


Figure 1: Visualization of Strategic Environment Consideration in States’ Decision Making Process made by the authors

2.5 Poliheuristic Theory of Decision making (PHT)

When it comes to creating foreign policy, the personality of the leader is quite important. The theory highlights how personality characteristics, particularly unique personality traits, might be used to explain how political decision-making is related to them. To comprehend the process of foreign policy decision making, it is vital to evaluate the leader's personality.

Since personality plays a more compelling influence than other international and domestic factors.⁵²

The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision-Making (PHT) is the most prominent approach of Foreign policy analysis which was developed in the early 1990s by a group of researchers led by Alex Mintz at Texas A&M University. According to this theory, leaders make decisions at two stages: decision making process, one by using a cognitive approach (heuristic) in which the state's officials choose to ignore some alternatives that they find distasteful from a domestic political standpoint as well as those that would put the interests of the state at risk.⁵³ As a consequence, the decision matrix is simplified. In the second step, which is known as the rational decision-making phase, "the remaining possibilities are analyzed in more depth, again utilizing heuristic reasoning. In short it bridges the gap between cognitive and rationalist approaches in foreign policy decision making. In a short period of time, this approach has made a significant position in the field of Foreign policy Analysis.⁵⁴

The proponents of the poliheuristic theory assert the importance of the domestic factors that influence or add dimensions to the decision making process. In such a scenario, leaders can benefit from a larger degree of independence in taking decisions in some areas such as taking decisions in critical situations that may be linked to the security of the state. Majority of the foreign policy decisions are taken by the President along with the help of his cabinet.⁵⁵ The role of leadership plays a vital role in foreign policy decision making and it falls under the unit level of analysis in which individuals become the focus of an analytical effort. Individuals within bureaucracies and governments are the ones who think and feel.

⁵² Ahatashm Jan Butt, Arfan Latif, Syed Ali Raza, Amaria Atta, "IDIOSYNCRASY OF THE AMERICAN PRESIDENTS AND THEIR ASIA-PACIFIC POLICY/POLITICS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 21ST CENTURY PRESIDENTS", JRSP published in March 2022 http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/12_59_1_22.pdf accessed on August 26th, 2022.

⁵³ Alex Mintz, "Applied Decision Analysis: Utilizing Poliheuristic Theory to Explain and Predict Foreign Policy and National Security Decisions", *International Studies Perspectives* published in 2005 https://www.academia.edu/41177571/Applied_Decision_Analysis_Utilizing_Poliheuristic_Theory_to_Expain_and_Predict_Foreign_Policy_and_National_Security_Decisions accessed on October 28th, 2022

⁵⁴ Steven B. Redd, "The Influence of Advisers on Foreign Policy Decision Making an Experimental Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* published in June 2002 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3176230> accessed on August 11th, 2022.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

A government does not compute and make rational choices as a collective entity; individuals do.⁵⁶

Goldgeier and MacFaul argued “Individual actors, not states, structures, or bureaucracies make choices about what foreign policy to pursue. People with names and faces, not the ‘US or ‘Russia’ or ‘globalization’ or ‘the international balance of power,’ make foreign policy.”⁵⁷ Foreign policy decisions are made by leaders based on their perceptions about the particular situation. According to this approach, while formulating the foreign policy, leaders apply a set of heuristics to exclude policy options that are undesirable to them based on their assessment of national and personal political interests.

According to the study conducted by Margaret G. Hermann there is a strong causal relationship between the leader’s perception and foreign policy decision making. Leader’s perception, his personality are the most important factors in order to understand the foreign policy behavior; however, the limitations of the international system and domestic political processes determine its applicability. The influence of personality in foreign policy should not be overlooked, and there are major events in international relations that may be attributed- at least partially- to prominent leaders' views and personal behavior.⁵⁸ There have been various ways in which a leader’s personality influences the foreign policy of the state.

The Middle East region has always been important to US interests. The Arab spring and emergence of terrorist groups further demanded the presence of the US in the region as a security perspective from the US perspective. The main goal of the US presidents in the 21st century is security policy. The idiosyncratic decision making of President Obama

⁵⁶ Jenice Gross Stein, "Foreign Policy Decision-Making, Rational, Psychological and Neurological Models," Oxford University Press published on August 11 2016

<https://www.oxfordpoliticstrove.com/view/10.1093/hepl/9780198708902.001.0001/hepl-9780198708902> accessed on August 12, 2022.

⁵⁷ James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, “Power and Purpose U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War”, Brookings published on October 29, 2003 <https://www.brookings.edu/book/power-and-purpose/> accessed on August 11, 2022.

⁵⁸ Zee Maoz and Allison Astorino, “The Cognitive Structure of Peace and War Argumentation: Israeli Prime Ministers versus the Knesset” *Political Psychology* published in 1992 https://www.jstor.org/register?redirectUri=%2Fstable%2F3791495%3Fread-now%3D1%23page_scan_tab_contents accessed on August 22nd, 2022.

resulted in direct engagement. His foreign policy approach was quite different from his predecessors. He preferred to resolve issues through diplomacy over military actions. He said, “Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail. In the Middle East, we used hammer strikes to showcase our power.” Instead of bringing stability these military interventions have further worsened the situation. Even the unmatched US military has not brought what the US actually desired for. So instead of continuing the military actions and sanctions he chose the path of diplomacy towards Iran by signing the JCPOA agreement a lot of think tanks viewed his personality as a double edge sword. He was confident in his decisions and had a kind of persuasive personality. He had a mindset of expanding US influence all around the globe through peace in order to counter the growing threats against the US.

On the other hand, the idiosyncratic behavior of President Trump came up in the form of “Make America great again” or “America First” policies. Withdrawing from multilateral agreement unilaterally without the consent of the US allies shows his mistrust of allies and super hyper confidence in himself. Various schools including isolationism, unilateralism, populism and nationalism explain his mindset regarding foreign military commitments, a disregard for human rights, a transactional view of relationships, and skepticism of capitalist partnerships.

Literature Review

There has been a massive amount of literature present on the US foreign policy towards Iran. Scholars have written extensively to illustrate their view on how these two presidents conducted their foreign policies. Some comparative studies have been done on President Obama and Trump on foreign policies towards areas like the Asia Pacific region, the Middle East, multilateralism vs unilateralism, Afghanistan, etc. However, there is a lack of adequate literature that tends to extensively discuss their foreign policy towards Iran specially JCPOA as major concepts in their foreign policy and how this deal played a key role in tackling the world’s security issue that Americans faced. Yet, the issue of the Iran nuclear deal continues to be relevant as to which of these two leaders adopted either of the concepts as his strategy. While some scholars believe Obama favored the signing of the nuclear deal with Iran’s foreign policy approach, others believe Trump preferred the

withdrawal approach. So, I'm going to provide a comparative analysis of the foreign policy of Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump towards Iran's nuclear issue.

Neo classical Realism

From Wealth to Power: The unusual Origins of America's World role by Fareed Zakariya was published in 1998. Fareed Zakariya is a proponent of neo classical theory, he has written various papers like the Post-American World, Does the 21st Century Belong to China? The Munk Debate on China and many more. In this book he answered some questions like how the great powers expand their influence around the globe. In order to answer these questions he used the case studies of the great powers.⁵⁹

Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relation is a book written by Martin Griffiths, he is senior professor at the School of Political and International Studies at the Flinders University of South Australia. He has written a number of books, some of his famous works includes Realism, Idealism and International Politics. In this book, the author discussed fifty renowned scholars of the 20th century. He discussed and analyzed the substantial contributions of each scholar and how they are still working.⁶⁰

Neo classical Realism, the state and foreign policy is a book written by Steven E. Lobell, NorrinM. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro. According to this book neo classical realism is one of the most prominent theories in international relations. Keeping in mind the international structure and domestic politics, neo classical realism explains and analyzes the foreign policy of the state. But the author argued that the internal politics does not play as decisive a role in directing foreign policy as Innenpolitik theories assume, since domestic groups are forced to contend with the constraints of the international system, which when severe limit choices and compel certain policy alternatives.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Fareed Zakaria, "From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role" Princeton Studies in International History and Politics pg 13-18 published on 1998
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347676447_From_Wealth_to_Power_The_Unusual_Origins_of_America's_World_Role_By_Fareed_Zakaria_Princeton_Princeton_University_Press_1998_199_pp accessed on August 18, 2022.

⁶⁰ Martin Griffiths, "Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relation", *London and New York* published on 1999
<file:///C:/Users/karso/Downloads/Griffiths,%2050%20Thinkers%20in%20IR.pdf> accessed on August 24th, 2022.

⁶¹ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy" Cambridge University Press published on June 5, 2012

The changing politics of foreign policy is a book written by Christopher Hill published in 2003. According to him “foreign policy is the hinge of domestic and international politics. “In other words foreign policy is a combination of both internal and external factors which influence the foreign policy of the state. From this we understand that foreign policy of the state is significantly reliant and influenced by the internal and external environment. Both internal and external factors combine to contribute to the foreign policy of the state.⁶² However, as several recent literature suggests, the internal factor affecting the US foreign policy, particularly in relation to Iranian nuclear weapons, are still understudied.⁶³

The Economics Sins of Modern IR Theory and the classical realist Alternative is an article written by Jonathan Kirshner, he is a political science and international studies professor at Boston College. His work is mainly focused around International relations, politics, and international economy. Currently he is pursuing a project on Classical realism. He has written a number of books, some of his work includes Currency and Coercion, American Power after the Financial Crisis and much more. In this article he highlighted that the incorrect application of price theory (microeconomic competition) is a major source of structural realism, particularly when considering the effects of oligopoly. Due to the rise of neo realism signaled a departure from the more established classical realist paradigm. According to the author the classical realism that focuses on ideology, history, contingency, and unpredictability was discarded in favor of more ostensibly scientific, and especially economic, approaches to IR theory.⁶⁴

Realism and International Relations is a research article written by Jack Donnelly is a professor at Graduate School of International Studies at the University of Denver. In this article the author provided a critical examination of political realism in international theory.

<https://acpicflavio2018.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/lobell-ripsman-taliaferro-neoclassical-realism.pdf> accessed on August 18, 2022.

⁶² Christopher Hill, "The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy", *Research Gate*, published in 2003 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231906388_The_Changing_Politics_of_Foreign_Policy_By_Christopher_Hill_New_York_Palgrave_2003_416p_7500_cloth_2495_paper, access on February 10th, 2022.

⁶³ ibid

⁶⁴ Jonathan Kirshner, "The economic sins of modern IR theory and the classical realist alternative" *The Johns Hopkins University Press* published in January 2015 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/14910D4D31BFB60C2CBCF8D8FF8FB553/S0043887114000318a.pdf/the-economic-sins-of-modern-ir-theory-and-the-classical-realist-alternative.pdf> February 15th, 2022.

The article examines realist interpretations of human nature and state motivation, international anarchy, system structure and the balance of power, international institutions, and morality in foreign policy. Contributors include Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, the Prisoners' Dilemma, Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. Donnelly contends that several prominent realists reject basic realist claims in addition to failing to stand up to criticism. According to the author, instead of being understood as a general theory of international relations, realism is considered a flawed theory program that highlights the restrictions imposed by individual and national egoism and international anarchy in an intelligent world.

The Wisdom of Classical Realism is a book written by Richard Ned Lebow, he is a James O. Freedman Presidential Professor Emeritus at Dartmouth College and a Professor of International Political Theory in the Department of War Studies at King's College London.

President Obama foreign policy towards Iran

President Obama's Legacy: The Iran Nuclear Agreement is a research article written by Milena Sterio in 2016. She is a professor of Law at Cleveland State University's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, and is a leading expert on international law. In this article, she has discussed the role of P5+1 world powers in signing a historic deal with Iran in order to stop Iran from uranium enrichment. The scholar has mentioned the reasons that lead Obama to sign an agreement with Iran. The agreement brought a few drawbacks along with benefits which has been discussed in the article. Moreover, she also discussed how this agreement evolved the US-Iran relations after such a long time. According to the author's analysis, this nuclear deal makes the world safer and more secure to live in. ⁶⁵

U.S. Foreign Policy towards Iranian Nuclear Threat from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump Administration is an article written by Anak Agung Banyu Perwita and Muhammad Ilham Razak. Anak Agung Banyu Perwita is a professor of international relations at Indonesia Defense University. He has done research on Foreign Policy, International Relations, and

⁶⁵ Milena Sterio, Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law, "President Obama's Legacy: The Iran Nuclear Agreement", published in 2016
<https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2236&context=jil>, accessed on December 24th December 2021.

International Security and Defense studies. Their current project is 'US Foreign Policy' and regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Muhammad Ilham Razak is a researcher and analyst with in-depth knowledge and a strong interest in public affairs and government relations. In their article, they have discussed the US foreign policy toward the threat generated from Iran nuclear weapons from Clinton to the Trump administration. They have mentioned the internal as well as external factors that influence the foreign policy of the US towards Iran in each administration.⁶⁶

Muhammad Amine El Khalfi in his research study on *Agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the US* argued that the Obama administration has adopted diplomacy while dealing with Iran and signed a nuclear deal with Iran to limit Iran nuclear capabilities but not only US allies in the Middle East like Saudi Arabia and Israel criticized the deal but Obama administration faced a lot of pressure domestically. The newly elected government under President Trump considered this deal unreliable and withdrew from the deal and re-impose sanctions on Iran.⁶⁷

American attitude towards Iran and its reflection on Iran policy towards the Arab region is a research article written by Athbi Zaid Khalaf, he argued that external factors play an important role in influencing the foreign policy of the state. These factors have a great impact on the decision makers in taking the decisions as the decision makers have to keep a lot of things for example the capabilities and potential of Iran in mind while formulating a foreign policy.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Anak Agung Banyu Perwita and Muhammad Ilham Razak, Insignia, "U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Iranian Nuclear Threat from Bill Clinton to Donald Trump Administration", published on April 2nd, 2020 <http://jos.unsoed.ac.id/index.php/insignia/article/view/2224/1420>, accessed on December 24th, 2021.

⁶⁷ Mohamad Amine El Khalfi, "Agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the US" Research Gate, published in August 2020 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344600846_AGREEMENT_ON_THE_JOINT_COMPREHENSIVE_PLAN_OF_ACTION_JCPOA_BETWEEN_IRAN_AND_THE_UNITED_STATES, accessed on December 24th, 2021.

⁶⁸ AthbiZaid Khalaf, "American attitude towards Iran and its reflection on Iran policy" Department of Political Science, Cairo University, Giza, Egypt published on February 11, 2020 <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/REPS-09-2019-0119/full/pdf> accessed on December 24th, 2021.

A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran is a book written by Trita Parsi in 2012. He is the founder and former president of the National Iranian American Council. He also frequently publishes articles and books, some of his famous works are *Treacherous Alliance*, and *Losing an Enemy*.⁶⁹

The Dangers of Lost U.S. Credibility in the Middle East is a journal written by Bobby Woods. In this journal the author discussed that the US really needs to adopt a realist approach towards Iran and also came up with a strategy that not only helps the US to prevent Iran from development of its nuclear weapon but also maintain good relations with other Middle Eastern states.⁷⁰

A Fighting Chance For Obama's Proposed Military Cuts? is a journal by Michel Martin, a journalist at NPR News. In this journal he discussed President Obama planning to limit the defense budget by cutting the army troop level. He was not sizing the military to execute protracted and significant stabilization missions after Iraq and Afghanistan.

Obama: 'Iran nuclear deal not based on trust' is a journal published in BBC News in which the author mentioned how President Obama created a whole structure of the nuclear deal in order to curb the Iranian nuclear threat.⁷¹

Strategic Vision America and the global power is a book written by Zbigniew Brzezinski, he was professor of foreign policy and served as a national security advisor under Carter administration. He has written a number of books. Some of his famous publications include *The Grand Chessboard*, *The geostrategic triad*, *Iran: Time for a New Approach* and many more. In this book he has highlighted the great powers that will shape the geopolitical landscape of the world. According to him, the emergence of regional powers, especially

⁶⁹ Trita Parsi, "A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran" *Yale university Press* published January 24, 2012 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00472336.2013.780473?needAccess=true&cookieSet=1> accessed on August 25th, 2022.

⁷⁰ Bobby Woods, "he Dangers of Lost U.S. Credibility in the Middle East" *The Diplomat* published on February 15, 2014 <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/the-dangers-of-lost-u-s-credibility-in-the-middle-east/> accessed on August 31st, 2022.

⁷¹ Obama: 'Iran nuclear deal not based on trust' *BBC News* published April 4th, 2015 <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-32180852> accessed on August 31st, 2022.

Asian powers will cause huge damage to the US hegemony. Moreover, rise in political uprising, interstate wars, intra state wars, terrorism, rise in power of non-state actors will lead to decline in the US power. He further argued that in order to maintain its hegemony the US has to play double roles, it needs to revitalize itself and also unified with Western allies.⁷²

Obama's Policy towards Iran: Comparing first and second term is a research article written by Claudia Castiglioni in 2013 published in ISPI. Claudia Castiglioni is a postdoctoral researcher at Ca' Foscari University. The author has addressed how Obama's administration opened up a window of opportunity to break the diplomatic gridlock and build the groundwork for the long-awaited Grand Bargain between the US and Iran. In this study the author has compared the first and second term of the Obama administration and highlighted how he changed his approach from his predecessors.⁷³

President Trump foreign policy towards Iran

The Real Psychology of the Trump Presidency (The Evolving American Presidency) is a book written by Stanley Renshon. The author provides an empirically informed psychological assessment of Donald Trump's presidential leadership and administration in this book. The author discussed Trump's vision, his view and strategy in formulating the foreign policy. Moreover it compares Trump policies with his predecessors in order to analyze the foreign policy of Trump.⁷⁴

Israel Lobby in the US and Iran-P5+1 Negotiations is a thesis written by Alireza Ahmadi in which he shed light on the role of Israel Lobby in the US foreign policy decision making.

⁷² Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Strategic Vision: America and the Crises of Global Power", published in 2012 https://mo.tnu.tj/wpcontent/uploads/2020/11/strategic_vision_america_and_the_crisis_of_global_power.pdf accessed on July 5th, 2022.

⁷³ Claudia Castiglioni, "OBAMA'S POLICY TOWARD IRAN: COMPARING FIRST AND SECOND TERM" *ISPI* published on December 2013 https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_220_2013.pdf accessed on December 24, 2021.

⁷⁴ Stanley Renshon, "The Real Psychology of the Trump Presidency (The Evolving American Presidency)", *Palgrave Macmillan* published in 2020 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm:978-3-030-45391-6/1.pdf> accessed on July 7th, 2022.

But the lobby faced a major challenge in stopping Obama from signing a nuclear deal with Israel's long term enemy, Iran. He further discussed the history of the Israel Lobby and its strategies to stop the Obama administration from signing nuclear deals. Moreover, he examined the challenges lobby faced in opposing the Obama administration.⁷⁵

US foreign policy towards Iran under Obama and Trump Administrations is a research article written by Mariam Javed Asghar in IUB Journal of Social Science published in December 2019. In this research article she has discussed the foreign policy of each president towards Iran and highlighted the drastic shift in the US behavior and its foreign policy.

Can The Iran Deal Survive A US Withdrawal? Is it a blog written by Francois Nicoulaud. He served as a professor at the Paris School of International Affairs. He acted as an ambassador in Budapest and Tehran. In the French foreign ministry, he had been in charge of nonproliferation and appointed ambassador to Tehran from 2001 to 2005, he was at the heart of the storm between the West and Iran, notably during the post-9/11 crisis. A man of peace, he continued to take constant positions in its favor until 2015 and the negotiations of the Iranian nuclear deal. Since 2005, he has been active as a political analyst in international affairs, concentrating on Iran and the Middle East. He has extracted from his experience in Iran a book entitled "The Turban and the Rose" (Ramsey, Paris, 2006). In his blog "Can the Iran Deal Survive A US Withdrawal?" He was concerned that the withdrawal from the nuclear deal would take the US back to the 2000s where Iran would be able to trade with the rest of the world with the exception of the US. The US sanctions on Iran could be dangerous for Iran's economy which naturally exercised an intimidating effect on the other countries' economic relations with Iran. This withdrawal allows conservatives in Iran to rise against President Hassan Rouhani and regain the hold on Iran. It was clear that

⁷⁵ Alireza Ahmadi, "Israel Lobby in the US and Iran-P5+1 Negotiations" *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/irfa/v5i1/f_0033547_27325.pdf accessed on December 22, 2021.

he didn't want to end this agreement. That is why he kept on emphasizing the implications of this withdrawal on the US, European states, Iran, and the rest of the world.⁷⁶

Lost in Transition? US foreign policy from Obama to Trump is a discussion paper written by Giovanni Grevi. He is senior associate at European policy center and also visits faculty at the College of Europe (Bruges), the Brussels School of Governance and Sciences Po, Paris (PSIA). In this discussion paper the author discussed the foreign policy of president Obama and Trump. He did the comparative analysis of both the presidents and argued the president foreign policy was an opposition to president Obama's grand strategy of leading from behind and direct engagement. Instead the president adopted an isolationist foreign policy and withdrew the US from all multilateral agreements.⁷⁷

Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran deal is a journal written by Anthony Zurcher published in BBC news. In this journal the author argued that president Trump wasn't not always against the Iranian nuclear deal and instead wanted to renegotiate the deal. But there have been a lot of reasons that led him to announce the unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal.⁷⁸

Trump's foreign policy towards Iran is a research article written by Kimberley Anna Nazareth, she has written a number of articles in foreign affairs and international relations. In this research article, in the first section of the article she highlighted the Obama foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal and in the second section she has discussed the reasons that force president Trump to walk away from the nuclear deal. The final section of the Article looks at the internal and external forces relating to Trump's stance on Iran.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ FRANÇOIS NICOUILLAUD, Lobe Log, "Can The Iran Deal Survive A US Withdrawal?", published on November 16, 2016 <https://lobelog.com/can-the-iran-deal-survive-a-us-withdrawal/>, accessed on December 24, 2021.

⁷⁷ Giovanni Grevi, "Lost in transition? US foreign policy from Obama to Trump", *European policy center*, published On December 2nd, 2016 [Lost in transition \(epc.eu\)](https://www.epc.eu/en/lost-in-transition-us-foreign-policy-from-obama-to-trump) accessed on September 3rd, 2022.

⁷⁸ Anthony Zurcher, "Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran deal" BBC News published on May 8, 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43902372> accessed on September 15th, 2022.

⁷⁹ kimberley anne Nazareth, "Trump's Policy Towards Iran: A DEAL UNDONE" *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* published in 2019 https://www.jstor.org/stable/48531098?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents&target=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuanN0b3lub3Jn accessed on December 24, 2021.

The Puzzle of the U.S. Foreign Policy Revision Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program is article written by Sina Abolghasem Rasouli, he has written number of articles and journals which includes on tyranny: twenty lessons from the twentieth century, Stability in Syria: save lives or protect the sovereignty of the state and many more. In this article he has highlighted the role of the group dynamics that has an influence over the decision making of the leader. He has discussed that the change in the president Trump's cabinet member which was mostly based on hardliners has put a greater impact on the way of thinking too that became one of the reasons that Trump unilaterally walked away from the Iranian nuclear deal without even thinking about the US long term European allies.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Sina Abolghasem Rasouli, "The Puzzle of U.S. Foreign Policy Revision Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program" E-International Relations published in July 10 2020 <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/07/10/the-puzzle-of-u-s-foreign-policy-revision-regarding-irans-nuclear-program/> accessed on September 1st, 2022.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The entire study design should be read through the lens of a qualitative research design because whole data is based on the analyzing of existing literature and observations. The goal of qualitative research is to characterize or comprehend the character or essence of human experience by focusing on the quality of the event. In a qualitative research method, the researcher collects and works with non-numerical data to extract meaning from it in order to better understand social phenomena. Instead of focusing solely on objective external reality, qualitative research included a greater emphasis on subjective human experience. Subjective human experience. It belongs to the school of interpretivism but it can also be applied to the school of positivism in some cases. The purpose of qualitative research is to comprehend, describe, and interpret information, as well as to produce hypotheses. It generally tackles various challenges that result from various philosophical perspectives, attempts to achieve various aims, and applies varied approaches and designs. There have been various techniques used in qualitative research which includes interviews, focus group discussion etc. According to Strauss and Corbin, A qualitative research methodology is a sort of research approach that provides findings not possible via the use of statistics or other quantitative methods.

Qualitative research method is more suitable for this research because the main objective of the study is to find the cause of inconsistency in the US foreign policy and analyze those causes to understand the foreign policies of the two US presidents. Since Qualitative research provides non-statically data and helps to obtain detailed answers to the questions for example, how and why an event happened? The research would be carried out by employing explanatory, analytical and comparative approaches to proceed and draw conclusions.

This section describes the research design, research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, the research design, and data collection used in this study. The focus of this study is to use case study design to compare the US foreign policies of US presidents, Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump towards Iran, especially in regard to what has become

known in Western literature as the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action” JCPOA. The key questions are what and why the US president signed and later on withdrew from the JCPOA agreement.

Table 1: Research Method and Methodology

Research Design	Explanatory Research
Research Approach	Deductive Approach
Research strategy	Case Study
Data collection	Primary and Secondary

3.1 **Research Design**

I have used Explanatory research design in this study. This study seeks an explanation of a situation or problem being studied and an explanation of pattern relating to studied phenomena. Explanatory research design investigates the relationship between variables of phenomena in order to establish a causal relationship between variables.

3.2 **Research Philosophy**

Research philosophies are also known as research assumptions. A research is founded on certain philosophical assumptions about what constitutes "valid" research and which research methodology is best for the development of knowledge in a particular study. It is therefore necessary to understand these assumptions in order to perform and assess any study.

According to Terre Blanche and Kevin Durrheim, there are three dimensions in the research process: ontology, epistemology and methodology. The research paradigm is a philosophical framework of interrelated practice and thinking that serves as the foundation for all research.

Methodologies are the means through which we acquire knowledge and it is closely associated with two concepts: ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the study of being, it studies the existence of the real world, epistemology on the other hand means to know about the real world by gaining knowledge and methodology means the tools and techniques to acquire the knowledge.⁸¹ This section discusses ontology and epistemology in preparation for the following sections, which focuses specifically on the methodological approach of the research. The research philosophy selected is crucial because it addresses the question of what will be considered new information and how it will be developed. Ontological and epistemological elements are concerned with a person's view about the world which has substantial impact on the perceived relative importance of the aspects of reality.

Table 2: Research Method in Politics and International Relations by Christopher Lamont, Mieczyslaw P. Boduszynski

Terms	Definition	What this means for research	How it shapes our research
Methodology	The ways through which we acquire knowledge	Relates to broader choices in the research question, research design, and how we approach research	Governs all aspects of the research process
Epistemology	The study of knowledge	Relates to questions of how knowledge is produced and what we value as scholarly knowledge	Governs how we distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' research and how we evaluate whether research contributes to knowledge in our fields
Ontology	The study of being	What are the objects that we study?	Governs those objects that we claim as building blocks for our research and for understanding

⁸¹ Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, "Approaches and Methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective" accessed June 5th, 2020.
https://www.hse.ru/data/2012/11/03/1249193115/Donatella_Della_Porta_Michael_Keating_Approa.pdf

The research philosophy is concerned with the nature and development of the knowledge. It is considered as an essential part in the research as theoretically, it represents the fundamental idea of the researcher about the world, and how it should be understood as a result it affects the research strategy and the methods selected as part of it. Most of the research is based on some events happening or happened at domestic or international level.

Ontology

Ontology is a very basic phenomena when it comes to research. It is a philosophical study of being. Ontology simply inquires the essential factors, the source, and what we can see, for example the “what” is always associated with ontology like what is reality, what is true etc. According to Snape and Spencer, ontology is the study of the reality of the world and what we can know about it. The primary ontological questions are whether there is a social reality that is distinct from how an individual sees and understands it, and if there is a single, universal social reality or merely a number of context-specific ones. It deals about how a person views reality and the social world. So under ontology you take into the consideration the assumptions that one makes about the nature of the world and reality. Ontology helps researchers in assessing how certain they are about the nature and existence of phenomena which they are studying. Some researchers will say that there is a single reality with facts and we can or we can't research it whereas other researchers say that there are multiple social realities. Who determines what is and isn't "real"? How do researchers address diverse and conflicting interpretations of reality?⁸²

If we link ontology from the perspective of social science research, it refers to the kinds of objects that exist in the social world, as well as beliefs about the shape and character of that social reality. It is focused on the question of whether social reality exists irrespective of human perception and knowledge. Snape and Spencer identify three types of ontological positions which include realism, Idealism and materialism. Moreover, Ontology is connected to two other fundamental questions: whether social entities should be considered

⁸² Rachel Ormston, Liz Spencer, Matt Barnard and Dawn Snape, "The foundation of qualitative research" SAGE published in 2003 https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58628_Ritchie_Qualitative_Research_Practice.pdf, accessed in September 17th, 2022.

objective or subjective. Hence, objectivism and subjectivism might be defined as two essential ontological assumptions.⁸³

According to realism, it asserts that there is an objective reality that exists independently of what people perceive or understand it to be. On the other hand, idealism claims that reality can only be grasped via the human mind and socially formed interpretations.⁸⁴ For example, The idea of a single reality that can be studied, understood, and perceived as a "truth" is central to realist ontology; a true reality that exists apart from human experience. Contrarily, relativist ontology believed the true reality or real, world is nothing, it is just created by the human mind. Rather, reality is 'relative' to how individuals see it at any particular place or moment.

Epistemology

Epistemology is another branch of the research paradigm which means 'study of knowledge'. It's concerned with all the elements to acquire knowledge which includes how we know and understand the world, and it is concerned with issues such as how we might understand reality and what is the underlying principle of our knowledge?

Epistemology is an essential part of research as it affects how researchers design their studies in their attempts to discover knowledge. By analyzing the relationship between a subject and an object, we may examine the concept of epistemology and how it influences the research design. According to objectivist epistemology, reality exists independently of a human mind. Objectivist research is useful in providing reliability (consistency of results obtained) and external validity (applicability of the results to other contexts).

On the other hand, According to subjectivist epistemology reality may be articulated in several ways including symbols and languages, and individuals can bend or mold the reality to serve their needs such that individuals give meaning to the world by interpreting it in ways that make sense to them. Subjectivist research is significant because it demonstrates how a person's life experiences shape their perception.

⁸³ ibid

⁸⁴ ibid

Interpretivist epistemology denies the idea that there is any objective truth in the world that needs to be revealed. They believed that 'truth' emerges through our involvement with the reality of our world. They don't believe in the existence of any real world that exists independently of human action or symbolic language. Constructivist research is helpful for developing contextual comprehensions of a certain topic or circumstance.

Every researcher has a philosophical perspective, either ontological or epistemological, that sets the scene for the methods they use to obtain findings. Based on these ontological and epistemological assumptions a researcher sets a foundation in order to understand the reality of the world. These assumptions are important as it influences how a researcher thinks and knowledge of social research in general as well as the development of research methods and methodologies used in the study. Qualitative research technique descriptions are likely to benefit from correctly stated ontological and epistemological perspectives. According to the experts, researchers cannot freely apply research methods instead researcher's own values have some impact on chosen research methods. As a result, it is critical for researchers to occupy their chosen position since it pertains to how they perceive and comprehend themselves in the development of new knowledge.

The process of research arose from man's desire to learn about new things, develop knowledge and to understand nature. In order to meet this desire man used different methods and logic that were available to him. On the other hand, research methodology merely refers to a guide for conducting research. In light of all of this, the philosophical research positions known as 'Epistemology' and 'Ontology' are critical.

In light of all of this, research paradigms or philosophical research positions known as 'Ontology' and 'Epistemology' are essential parts of research. We might conclude that having a distinct philosophical research viewpoint improves the approaches and designs used in a certain research field.

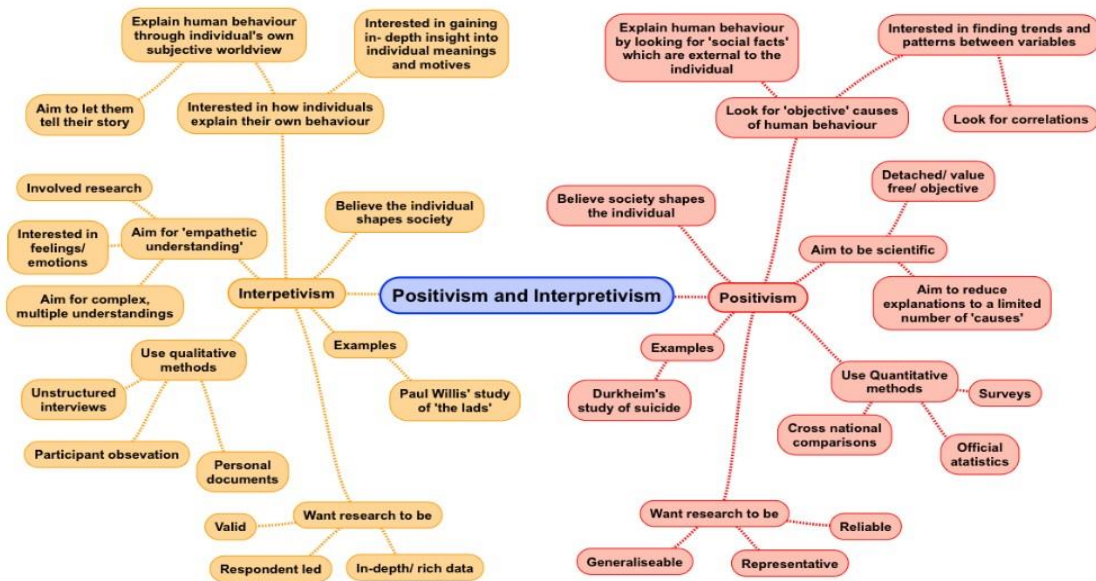


Figure 2: Positivism and Interpretivism diagram

Positivism and Interpretivism are two main approaches in research. Positivism originated from the use of natural science research methods to the social sciences. According to positivists, individuals gather knowledge from their understanding and observation from their surroundings and analyze that knowledge. Positivists believed that the environment shapes the individual's thinking and affects their actions. According to positivists, studying the social world is similar to studying the natural world. Observations and experiments can be used to test the theories of international relations. There is a long history of positivist study in international relations that is comparable to that in political science and dates back to Hans Morgenthau, a key player in the discipline who believed that international politics is regulated by objective law and reason. In his *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz created an idea of the system structure of international politics.⁸⁵ In the majority of cases, positivists emphasize the significance of doing quantitative research, such as extensive surveys, in order to get a comprehensive understanding of society as a whole and to learn new information.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Christopher Lamont, "Research Methods in International Relations" SAGE publications Ltd published in 2015 [Research%20Methods%20in%20Politics%20and%20International%20Relations%20by%20Christopher%20Lamont%20\(z-lib.org\).pdf](https://www.z-lib.org/pdf/Research%20Methods%20in%20Politics%20and%20International%20Relations%20by%20Christopher%20Lamont%20(z-lib.org).pdf) accessed on September 9, 2022.

⁸⁶ Noella Mackenzie and Sally Knipe, "Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology", IIER, <http://www.iier.org.au/iier16/mackenzie.html> accessed on June 2nd, 2022

On the other hand interpretivism Individuals are not chess pieces who just follow external social pressure, as Positivists claim. Believe. Interpretivists believe that the individuals are complicated and intricate, different individuals have different perceptions and reasoning regarding the same objective reality based on their own experiences. Hence, the scientific methods are not useful in this case. Interpretivism is a qualitative subject research philosophy where the researcher explores some phenomena. The interpretivists researcher will most likely use qualitative data collecting and analysis methods, or a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.⁸⁷

In this study I have used a positivist approach to explain the relationship between two variables. In a positivist approach researchers used two main strategies: observations and experimentation. In the case of international relation researchers frequently used observations either based on a large number of cases or on few cases.

In this study I have done a comparative analysis on what grounds the foreign policy of both administrations differs towards Iran. The data gathered for this research was conducted using a positivist approach. Positivists believed in a single reality that is possible to understand. The positivists generate hypotheses and then approve or disapprove it by doing data analysis. They try to investigate the existence of a relationship between two variables rather than the reason behind it. Christopher Lamont while discussing methodology for International Relations stated that scholars often treat positivism as a quantitative approach whereas according to him, although International Relations takes inspiration from theories yet positivism is at core of this qualitative inquiry.⁸⁸

In this research, I have done data analysis in order to analyze that despite having the same objectives, the shift in US administration brought change in US foreign policy toward Iranian nuclear deal. I have gone through the foreign policies of both the presidents to

⁸⁷ ibid

⁸⁸ Christopher Lamont, "Research Methods in International Relations" SAGE publications Ltd published in 2015
[Research%20Methods%20in%20Politics%20and%20International%20Relations%20by%20Christopher%20Lamont%20\(z-lib.org\).pdf](#) accessed on September9, 2022.

understand the factors and their own perceptions while formulating the foreign policy towards the Iran nuclear deal.

Metatheoretical Assumptions About	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology	Person (researcher) and reality are separate.	Person (researcher) and reality are inseparable (life-world).
Epistemology	Objective reality exists beyond the human mind.	Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a person's lived experience.
Research Object	Research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher.	Research object is interpreted in light of meaning structure of person's (researcher's) lived experience.
Method	Statistics, content analysis.	Hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.
Theory of Truth	Correspondence theory of truth: one-to-one mapping between research statements and reality.	Truth as intentional fulfillment: interpretations of research object match lived experience of object.
Validity	Certainty: data truly measures reality.	Defensible knowledge claims.
Reliability	Replicability: research results can be reproduced.	Interpretive awareness: researchers recognize and address implications of their subjectivity.

3.3 Research Approach

I have used the deductive approach in this study, the deductive research technique differs from other qualitative approaches in that it uses theoretical hypotheses drawn from a survey of the literature as its starting point before applying it to the gathered data from various sources in order to analyze the gathered data. For case study methodologies, and particularly for explanatory or exploratory case studies, deductive analysis is particularly pertinent.

Frieden argued that deduction has the benefit of being able to "objectively" notice changes in circumstances that may influence preferences and objectives of the presidents, even though the preferences are difficult to perceive. According to Frieden, this approach can be suitable to study and analyze the changes in objectives of both the presidents that bring

change in the US foreign policy. The only problem with the deductive approach is that the preferences deduced from prior theories can thus only be as good as the theories themselves.

3.4 **Research Strategy**

A research strategy is essentially a plan for achieving a researcher's study goal. There have been various types of research strategies such as surveys, Experiments, Grounded theory, Ethnography, Action research, Case study etc. In this study, I will use a qualitative Case Study research strategy which includes a single case along with embedded units. If the researcher is analyzing a case in which she or he observes a change or shift as a result of different decisions made by leaders toward one particular state, then a holistic case study with embedded units would allow the researcher to explore the case while taking into account the influence of various factors on the leader's decision making.

When you consider that data may be studied within the subunits independently, across the different subunits, or across all of the subunits, you can see how powerful it is to examine sub-units that are located within a bigger case. The possibility to do such in-depth study only serves to illuminate the research.⁸⁹

The case study in this research has used Frieden deduction as a method in order to identify the objectives of both presidents because it allows one to have a better and in depth understanding of various factors that affect the decision making and foreign policies of both the presidents towards the Iran nuclear deal. Although it is difficult to understand a leader's mindset or his perception while formulating foreign policy, researchers can observe the strategies and the trend of US foreign policy towards Iran in the past to stop Iran from its nuclear weapon development.

In my study I'll use Iran as a case study in which different subunits (between case analyses), will be used with a temporal comparison between US foreign policy of Obama and Trump

⁸⁹ Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, Research Gate, "Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers", accessed on March, 26th, 2022.

towards Iran. Since my objective is to find the reason behind the change and inconsistency in US foreign policy towards Iran, this study will be presented as an individual case study.

Case Study

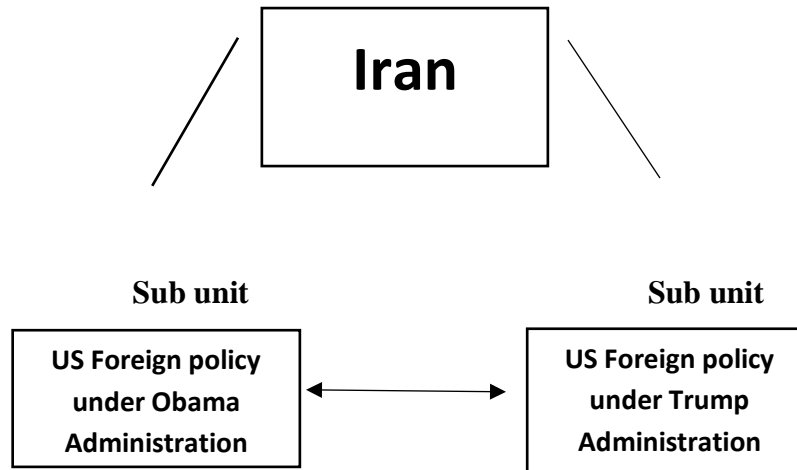


Figure 3: Comparison between two sub units

The research procedures used in a scientific work may be thought of as blueprints that guide a researcher through the various stages of the research process. A set of instruments or procedures that allows a researcher to explore and examine the core cause of an issue is frequently referred to as research methods.

3.5 Data Collection

Since this research methodology is qualitative, literature of different kinds is the main and only source used to collect data. The research draws on a wealth of primary documents collected from White House Archives of President Obama, White House Archives of President Donald Trump and by analyzing the National Security Strategies of each president. A wide range of sources were consulted and analyzed in order to understand the role of each President. Moreover, the declassified documents from the highest rank of the US government are of most significance. These include meetings of Cabinet members, meetings of presidents, and meetings of national security planning groups during the Obama presidency. This type of data collection is more valuable because it is a documentary record taken by the president and their advisors, the data they consulted, the opinions they

held and expressed during these meetings, whether or not those opinions changed, the decisions they made, how they were implemented, and any changes they made as a result of those implementations, if any.

The briefing papers, memoranda, and other documents generated by mid- to lower-level bureaucrats and the part they played in presenting the president with information on which their judgments were based supplement the official documented record of the decision-making process. These records of closed door meetings, where the president may express his genuine opinions without having to modify them for public and political consumption, allow us to piece together a thorough picture of each president's worldview. Moreover, the documents also helped to analyze the leadership and decision making style of both presidents, his thinking behind formulating and implementing the foreign policy.

Books, articles and journals are the secondary sources to collect data. The Internet and other databases, where many analyses may be found and utilized as data, would be another helpful study tool. Data for this study will be composed of different documents about the Obama and Trump foreign policy towards Iran. The corpus will be extracted from the official materials that both administrations issued about the Iranian nuclear deal when they were in office. This study has studied the factors that have influenced the foreign policy of both the presidents as important parameters in deepening one's understanding of the Obama and Trump administrations towards Iran. In order to retrieve every important data on US foreign policy toward Iranian nuclear issue or JCPOA agreement under the Obama and Trump administrations, the literature has been qualitatively evaluated. Such information will subsequently be used to examine both administrations' foreign policy toward Iran in relation to the JCPOA deal, in order to determine the extent to which both US presidents have succeeded in restraining Iran's nuclear goals.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis/Results/Findings

4.1 US Foreign policy towards Iranian Nuclear Deal

This chapter discusses US relations with Iran during the Obama and Trump administrations and will be on the comparative analysis of the foreign policies of the Obama and Trump administrations in regard to the JCPOA agreement. The Obama and Trump administrations have taken the opposite approaches to each other; one signed it and the other withdrew it with the same ultimate goal of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by limiting or banning its uranium enrichment capability. In order to understand the current animosity between the US and Iran it is important to analyze the relations between both the states in the past.

US-Iran relation during cold war

The US and Iran have a long history together but the problem between the US and Iran is that they have their roots in a historical relationship that goes back many years. From the 18th century, when American colonial settlers had a somewhat romanticized view of Persia, through the late 19th century, when successive generations of Iranian reformists were enthralled by and inspired by American democracy and constitutionalism, there has been a long history of shared fascination and admiration.

The end of the World War and anti-colonialism brought democracy in various states of the world. With democracy in Iran, Muhammad Mosaddegh was elected as prime minister of Iran in 1951 but his government was toppled in 1953 in a coup organized by CIA and MI6. The Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was restored as a new ruler of Iran who was not only loyal to the British Empire but also Pro American who was the most trustable US ally in Middle East against the Soviets. Under the rule of Reza Shah, Iran became the closest and most trustworthy ally of the US in the Middle East.⁹⁰ During his rule for next 3 decades, the US-Iran relations were quite friendly, the US poured economic and military help to Iran

⁹⁰ "CIA-assisted coup overthrows government of Iran", History published in August 2019 <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/cia-assisted-coup-overthrows-government-of-iran> accessed on August 27th, 2022.

and Iran became the single largest armed purchases state.⁹¹ Furthermore, the US "developed a unique and extraordinary bond with the ruler of Iran dubbed the Twin Pillar strategy" during the President Nixon administration. Under this strategy, the US has declared the Shah of Iran as a guardian of the US interests in the Middle East and in return the US gave him a "blank check" to acquire non-nuclear US military hardware.⁹² The US Iran relation went smooth throughout the Shah regime. In 1957, during the Shah's regime, the US assisted Iran in the development of its nuclear program which provided Iran with the first nuclear reactor, nuclear fuel, technology and training.⁹³

Both states had good relations throughout the 50s and 60s but by the 1970s, the relations had grown significantly stronger. It occurred at a time when the shah's regime was becoming more autocratic and when massive amounts of money were flooding into Iranian coffers as a result of the 1973 Arab oil embargo, which Iran did not fully observe but greatly benefited from economically. But the close bonding between the Shah of Iran and the US resulted in the revolution in Iran in 1979.⁹⁴ The reason behind the revolution was that Reza Shah was quite unpopular in Iran because Iranian people were angry about replacing the Mossadegh elected government with Shah's dictatorship. Moreover his brutal authoritarian rule in Iran and pro-western policies in Iran further made people furious.⁹⁵

In 1979 a revolution erupted in Iran that overthrew the Shah's brutal regime and installed theology in Iran. The revolutionary group attacked the US embassy in Tehran and took 52 US diplomats hostage for 444 days. The US hostage crises had created a violent image of Iran, damaging its prestige and status around the world. The Iranian revolutions of 1979

⁹¹ Stephen McGlinchey, "How the Shah Entangled America" *The National Interest* published on August 2nd, 2013 <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/how-the-shah-entangled-america-8821> accessed August 27th, 2022.

⁹² ibid

⁹³ Steve Inskeep, "Born in the USA: How America Created Iran's Nuclear Program" NPR published on September 18, 2015 <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/18/440567960/born-in-the-u-s-a-how-america-created-irans-nuclear-program> accessed on August 28th, 2022.

⁹⁴ John Ghazvinian, "A history of U.S.-Iran relations" Penn Today published on January 9, 2020 <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/history-us-iran-relations> accessed on August 31st, 2022.

⁹⁵ Mostafa T. Zahrani, "The Coup That Changed the Middle East Mossadeq V. The CIA in Restrospect", *World Policy Journal*, published in 2022 <https://read.dukeupress.edu/world-policy-journal/article-abstract/19/2/93/30711/The-Coup-That-Changed-the-Middle-EastMossadeq-V> accessed on August 27th, 2022.

changed the relations between both the states forever. Since then there were high tense relations with no interaction between both the states.⁹⁶

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), like the hostage crisis, is considered as part of Iran's war against the US. However, unlike the hostage crisis, Americans have mixed feelings about the Iran-Iraq War, if they really remember it at all. The war began in 1980 when Iraqi leader Saddam Hussain invaded Iran. Since the Iranian revolution, the historically antagonistic relationships between neighbors have gotten worse due the war. There was a narrative in Iran that the US was behind the Iraq invasion on Iran. During the war, stressing the US engagement helped to galvanize support for the war effort by raising the conflict's stakes.

US-Iran relation in post-cold war period

The death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the end of the cold war brought a shift in the Iranian foreign policy from theological to being pragmatic. With the government of Rafsanjani, Iran had opened new doors for diplomacy and negotiations. They shifted their foreign policies away from revolutionary to rational decision making. They tried to have good relations with neighboring states instead of exporting Islamic revolution.⁹⁷

Perhaps, in 1997 the relations between the US and Iran improved during the presidency of Muhammad Khatami. During his inauguration speech he mentioned that Iran is all set to have “relations with any state which respects our independence”. During his interview with CNN he expressed regret for the hostage situation.⁹⁸ He expressed his willingness to break the ice of mistrust and hatred between the US and Iran by exchanging scholars, writers, professors, journalists and tourists. The changed attitude of Iran also convinced the US administration to change their behavior towards Iran.

⁹⁶ "The Iranian Hostage Crisis" *Office of the Historian* <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises> accessed on September 2nd, 2010

⁹⁷ Reza Ekhtiari Amir, "Foreign Policy of Iran after Islamic Revolution", *Journal of Politics and Law*, published on September 2nd, 2010 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261177286_Foreign_Policy_of_Iran_after_Islamic_Revolution accessed August 28th, 2022.

⁹⁸ Barbara Slavin, "Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies" St. Martin's Press; 1st edition published on October 16, 2007 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13518040902918550?journalCode=fslv20> accessed on August 27th, 2022.

The US administration under President Bill Clinton saw an opportunity to improve US relations with Iran. The melting of formerly stiff relations may be seen for example by sending aid to Iran's Bam city which was badly devastated due to the earthquake and establishing various facilities for the export of food and medical essentials. Moreover, sending the US wrestling team to Iran which received a warm welcome from Iranians. It was the first official visit of the US in Iran since Iranian revolution. In 1998, American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright emphasized the significance of strengthening ties with Iran.⁹⁹

The relations between both states deteriorated again in 1999 when a bomb had exploded in front of a housing complex in Saudi Arabia and after investigation he was founded that Saudi based Hezbollah was behind this attached with whom Iran has been associated.

US-Iran relation after 9/11 event

The 9/11 event has changed the geopolitics of the world. The US foreign policy goal was to prevent the states that were involved in sponsoring the terrorism and pose threat to international peace and security. Although the relations were good in the beginning where Iran sent well wishes to American citizens after the 9/11 incident. But in 2002 during the state of the Union address, President Bush labelled Iran, Iraq and North Korea as "Axis of Evil" because he believed that these states were also involved in state sponsor terrorism. Iran was among those states in fact it was an official announcement by the Bush administration to Iran that it was involved in Weapon of Mass destruction and export terror in other states.¹⁰⁰ Once again, the relations between both the states became distrustful and stagnant with limited contact.

The relations further deteriorated when an exile group of rebels disclosed that Iran was pursuing its nuclear weapons at two installations that were previously revealed publicly. Since Iran was a member of Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the development of nuclear

⁹⁹ Saeid Naji & Jayum A. Jawan, "US-Iran Relations in the Post-Cold War Geopolitical Order " Canadian Center of Science and Education published on May 15, 2011 <file:///C:/Users/karso/Downloads/10254-36063-1-PB.pdf> accessed on August 28th, 2022.

¹⁰⁰ George W. Bush, "President Delivers State of the Union Address" The White House published on January 29, 2002 <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html> accessed on August 27th, 2022.

weapons was a violation of NPT. In 2003 the Iranian government wanted to normalize its relations with the US. Iran has offered a grand bargain to the US that if the US has lift up the sanctions imposed on Iran and provide security guarantees to Iran that they would not interfere in Iran's internal affair then it would promise to assist in stabilizing Iraq, will put a stop on Hamas and Hezbollah activities in the region, and suspend its nuclear program. However, the hardcore Bush administration resisted any kind of reconciliation with Iran and continued its campaign of condemnation of Iran. The hope for normalization of relations died when Mahmud Ahmadinejad was elected as president of Iran in 2005.¹⁰¹ Initially, Mahmud Ahmadinejad also attempted to resolve Iran's differences with the US, and he wrote two letters to the US administration, which were entirely disregarded by the US administration since they did not fit into the US Middle East geopolitical interests.¹⁰²

Whatever the reason, US policy toward Iran under the Bush administration was characterized by a mix of apathy and animosity. The Bush administration imposed sanctions on Iran in order to ensure Iran's diplomatic isolation. The US administration wanted to bring regime change in Iran by adopting various strategies to destabilize the Iranian government. Iran's diplomatic stance evolved as the Bush administration's attitude toward it became more antagonistic.¹⁰³ Iranian leaders believed that they had helped the US by making constructive contributions to establishing peace and order in post-invasion Afghanistan and Iraq, and they felt misled and let down by the US administration.

4.2 US Foreign policy towards Iranian Nuclear Deal under Obama Presidency

Barack Obama won the election and became the 44th president of the US. Throughout his presidential campaign he projected and propagated "hope" and "change" to the American

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey Fields, "US and Iran have a long, troubled history", The Conversation published January 16, 2020 <https://theconversation.com/us-and-iran-have-a-long-troubled-history-129844> accessed on August 31st, 2022.

¹⁰² "Transcript: Ahmadinejad Interview, Part 1" CBS News published on September 20, 2007 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-ahmadinejad-interview-part-1/> accessed on August 31st, 2022.

¹⁰³ Daniel Heradstveit and G. Matthew Bonham, "What the Axis of Evil Metaphor Did to Iran", Norwegian Institute of International Affairs <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/27551/655.pdf> accessed on September 1st, 2022.

people and the rest of the world. After taking charge as the US president, Obama tried to end the longstanding enmity with Iran and normalize relations between both the states.

A moderate government in US

Among all other presidents, Barack Obama is the one who strongly put efforts to overcome decades of hostility with Tehran. He repeatedly declared during his presidential campaign that he wants to end the long standing estrangements between the US and Iran, and he followed that when he became the president. In his National Security Strategy 2010 he mentioned that Iranian nuclear issue has endangered the security of the Middle and posed a serious threat to international peace and security. In order to maintain international peace and security it is important to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon while also addressing the root causes of other conflicts.¹⁰⁴

Barack Obama's concession to the president restored the US ties with its allies and dealt with states that were hostile to the US, notably Iran. He made relatively minor substantial changes to US policy toward Iran in the first six months of 2009. Majority of the changes were purely linguistic in nature. However, words matter a lot in international politics. The shift in tone from Bush's "axis of evil" hyperbole to Obama's courteous overtures has already enhanced diplomatic chances. Obama gave an interview to the Arabic-language television network Al Arabiya shortly after his inauguration. He said that "If states like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us".¹⁰⁵ Obama suggested "direct involvement" a few weeks later, saying, "We can start sitting across the table, face-to-face to drive our policies in a new way."¹⁰⁶

The Obama administration prioritized dialogue with Iran, especially emphasizing "strategic engagement" and "strategic patience" in the 2012 and 2015 National Security

¹⁰⁴ National Security Strategy of 2010 pg. no. 26 [2010.pdf \(nssarchive.us\)](#) accessed on June 15th, 2022

¹⁰⁵ Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, "On Iran, Obama Plans Talk and Some Toughness", *The New York Times*, published on February 3rd, 2009 <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/washington/04diplo.html>, accessed on June 15th, 2022

¹⁰⁶ T. ERDBRINK, "Iran Signals Opening with U.S.", *Washington Post*, published on February 11th, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/10/AR2009021000210.htm>, accessed on June 15th, 2022.

Strategies.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand Iran has also responded to these overtures favorably. The Obama administration was all willing to have constructive ties with Iran by engaging through peaceful means rather than putting a harsh stance over Iran. Obama's diplomatic efforts were successful after many rounds of discussions, and a deal was reached between the P5+1 and Iran.

Despite the fierce opposition, there were certain factors that pushed President Obama to sign a nuclear deal with Iran. Obama's predecessor opted a different approach towards containing Iran from development of nuclear weapons but these policies were not giving the desired objectives to the US and have weakened its credibility in the Middle East. The ongoing crises in the Middle East and Iran's suspicious activities in the region are some major concerns of the US. President Obama has often stated that the US will "do whatever it takes" to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, but the US has yet to do the sorts of actions that lend validity to such a promise. Iran's unwillingness to stop the uranium enrichment was the realization for the US administration to adopt a more realistic foreign policy. The Obama administration decided to opt for a more coherent and practical approach that could effectively help the US to contain Iranian nuclear program.¹⁰⁸

Obama stated in a New York Times columnist Thomas Freidman interview keeping in mind the past US projection of force against Iran, "There are no other choices beside diplomatic engagement with Iran. We can't strike, they will find excuses, and say, if you don't have nuclear weapons America will strike, with only sanctions, we have little insight of what they are doing."¹⁰⁹ He remarked that through diplomatic trust, we may have a better understanding of their strength. He further stated, "Diplomatic means are less risky in the long run even if it doesn't have hopeful ramification, because it doesn't mean that we didn't bring our rifles."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Trita Parsi, "A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran" *New Haven: Yale University Press* published in 2014

¹⁰⁸ Bobby Woods, "The Dangers of Lost U.S. Credibility in the Middle East", *The Diplomat* published on February 15, 2014 <https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/the-dangers-of-lost-u-s-credibility-in-the-middle-east/> accessed on August 1, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Leslye Davis, A.J. Chavar, Abe Sater and David Frank, "Exclusive Interview: Obama on the World", *The New York Times*, August 9, 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/10000003048414/obama-on-the-world.html>, accessed on July 31st, 2022.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

The US has imposed destructive sanctions on Iran in order to weaken its economy and forcing the government to give up its nuclear program which was an absurd idea; but sanctions hardly meet the ultimate political goals set by the US, in fact, Iran has bared sanction for almost thirty years and steadily stood against them proving itself a strong state in the Middle East that cannot be easily defeated and also have a say in decision making and affairs of the region. Although the Iranian public has suffered a lot due to these sanctions and crippled economic conditions, they never lost their faith in their government, instead they put pressure on their government to opt for a soft stance while negotiating with great powers especially the US in order to achieve more satisfactory outcomes. According to the Gallup poll in Iran, despite of dealing with worst economic crisis in Iran, 47 % of Iranian people didn't agree to give up on their nuclear program, these sanctions has destroyed the Iranian economy resulted in 33% increase unemployment but Iranian citizen still give preference to their nuclear program because according to them their security should be above everything. The Iranian people never blamed their own government for crippled economy but instead blamed the US administration.¹¹¹ The US suffered greatly as a result of this approach, which left it in a weak position in the region and toward Iran.

In august 2015 during Obama's speech at American University, he discussed that the sanctions have failed to curb Iran nuclear program. There had been a longstanding estrangement between the US and Iran, the best possible way is to engage Iran through dialogue and sign a nuclear agreement with Iran. In absence of such an agreement, Iran would continue its nuclear development and the only option left to stop Iran would be military strike and this could be dangerous. Obama chose nuclear agreement over military strikes against Iran to avoid any other long disastrous war in the Middle Eastern Region either started by Saudi Arabia or Israel. The Republic were skeptical of the agreement and vowed to disrupt it or place further sanctions but President Obama attempted to convince Republicans that by stating that the agreement was "not based on faith," but on "unprecedented verification."¹¹²

¹¹¹ Jihad Fakhreddine and Travis Owen, "Iranians Saw Conditions Improving Amid Eased Sanctions" Gallup published on March 31, 2015 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/182198/iranians-saw-conditions-improving-amid-eased-sanctions.aspx> accessed on July 31st, 2022.

¹¹² "Obama: 'Iran nuclear deal not based on trust'", BBC, published on April 4th, 2015 <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-32180852> accessed on July 3rd, 2022

Zbigniew Brzezinski former national security advisor highlighted in his book ‘Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power,’ “Obama has not disowned the necessity of war sometimes, but has made it very clear that America should avoid pursuing single, solitary wars without international support, committed America to collective security and not to unilateral actions.”¹¹³ Micheal Doran, senior fellow and Director, Centre for Peace and Security in the Middle East, mentioned that in order to avoid tussle and come to a common point, Obama needs to opt for an ‘open hand’ policy approach towards Iran.¹¹⁴ Obama adopted an open hand side policy starting with his three minutes’ speech in March Nowruz. During his address he Showed his admiration towards the Iranian culture while quoting some Persian poets he spoke little Farsi also and then said, “my administration committed to engage in a diplomacy that is honest and grounded in mutual respect, cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions that demonstrate the true greatness of the Iranian people and civilization.”¹¹⁵ Obama asked Iranian officials to celebrate the Fourth of July with him, this is known as ‘Hot Dog Diplomacy in order to normalize the US-Iran relations.¹¹⁶

US losing its Credibility in the Middles East

President Bush foreign policy towards Iran and towards other Middle Eastern states infuriated not just the Iranian citizens, but also created a terrible image of the US throughout the region, increasing their antipathy for the US government to an unprecedented degree. When Obama became the President, the US’s approval rating with the international community was quite low. Obama’s presidency brought new hopes as he supported reaching out to Iran in an effort to support the notion of multilateralism over

¹¹³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Strategic Vision: America and the Crises of Global Power”, published in 2012 pg no.45 https://mo.tnu.tj/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/strategic_vision_america_and_the_crisis_of_global_power.pdf accessed on July 5th, 2022.

¹¹⁴ Michael Doran, "The Doctrine of American Unexceptionalism", *Hudson Institute* published on May 10, 2022 <https://www.hudson.org/research/17814-the-doctrine-of-american-unexceptionalism> accessed on July 31st, 2022.

¹¹⁵ Laura Rozen, "In New Year’s message, Obama reaches out to Iran", *Foreign Policy* published on March 20, 2009 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/03/20/in-new-years-message-obama-reaches-out-to-iran/> accessed on July 31st, 2022.

¹¹⁶ "Come Celebrate! No, Maybe Not", *The New York Times* published on June 24, 2009 <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/25/us/politics/25invite.html>, accessed on July 31st, 2022.

unilateralism.¹¹⁷ Previously, the US pursued a unilateral foreign policy with a little assistance from other states and international institutions. However, during the George W. Bush second term presidency, the US has increasingly coordinated its Iran policy with other UNSC P5+1 members. This move has increased the US's reliance on the policies of the other members of the P5+1. By doing this, the Obama administration limited viable US policy options to the spectrum of outcomes that were acceptable to its US allies by seeking a multilateral approach to the Iranian nuclear dilemma. The fact that the other P5 + 1 states clearly indicated that they would execute the JCPOA agreement even if the US did not, rendering unilateral US efforts to push Iran to halt enrichment fruitless, was a crucial factor in discouraging Congress from rejecting the JCPOA.

Emergence of other Regional powers

It is not necessary that governments bring change in the policies when these policies fail or do not give them the desired outcomes but sometimes it also demands leaders to be open to new ideas and knowledge in order to have a realistic look over the world issues. Obama has clearly seen the decline in the US power due to rigid policies of the US and emergence of other great powers like China and Russia in the region resulting in the great power competition between the great powers. The rising powers increase their influence beyond their regions. For example, Russia's intervention in Syria as well as it was trying to rebuild its relations with Middle Eastern states. Middle Eastern states and Russia are significant producers of oil and gas and have substantial investments in the energy markets. Moreover due to the sanctions on Iran, both states found a common ground for collaboration in economic and security spheres.¹¹⁸ Moreover, China is increasing its presence in the Middle East by becoming one of the biggest foreign investors and economic partners of several Middle Eastern states.¹¹⁹ China is economically engaged with these states but it continues

¹¹⁷ KIMBERLEY ANNE NAZARETH, "Trump's Policy towards Iran: A DEAL UNDONE", *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* published on June 2019 https://www.jstor.org/stable/48531098?read-now=1&seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents&target=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuanN0b3lub3Jn accessed on August 5th, 2022.

¹¹⁸ Dmitri Trenin "Russia and Iran: Historic Mistrust and Contemporary Partnership" *Carnegie Endorsement for International Peace*, published August 18, 2016 <https://carnegiemoscow.org/2016/08/18/russia-and-iran-historic-mistrust-and-contemporary-partnership-pub-64365> accessed on August 11, 2022.

¹¹⁹ Zvi Mazel, "China's growing economic impact on the Middle East" *GIS* published on April, 21, 2022 <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/china-middle-east/> accessed August 11, 2022.

to make every effort to stay out of regional crises and steer out of a run-in with the US. China has a sweeping economic and security partnership with Iran with its presence in telecommunication, banking, Rail and roads along with various other projects. Furthermore, both states have strengthened military collaboration, potentially providing China a foothold in the region that has been a strategic concern for the US for decades.¹²⁰ The growing influence of other great powers in the region, specifically their increasing engagement with Iran over various projects, gave a red signal to the Obama administration to change its rigid policy to a more moderate policy towards Iran. The Obama Administration must create a more comprehensive strategy that indicates to the Russians that betting on Iran would be riskier than it would be worthwhile, even if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons.

A Moderate Regime in Iran

One of the reasons for extending hands towards Iran was the change in Iran's government from hardliner to moderate. When Obama became the president of the US, he tried to end the longstanding entanglement between the US and Iran but none of his efforts turned fruitful due to the hardliner government of Ahmadinejad in Iran. In many forums he criticized the US for its defensive attitude towards Iran. While giving an interview to Associated Press he said, "Those who insist on having hostilities with us kill and destroy the option of friendship with us in the future."¹²¹ He least bothered the IAEA resolutions or sanctions by the US and its allies. He believed in retaliatory behavior towards them. Ahmadinejad's eight years of unproductive nuclear negotiations, provided a chance for Iranian moderates to bounce back from their defeat in the 2005 presidential election. President Hassan Rohani's government was much more moderate and his government was an important factor in facilitating JCPOA settlement.¹²² He had adopted a pragmatic

¹²⁰ Farnaz Fassihi and Steven Lee Myers "Defying U.S., China and Iran Near Trade and Military Partnership" *The New York Times* published on July 11, 2020 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/11/world/asia/china-iran-trade-military-deal.html> accessed on August 11, 2022.

¹²¹ Jeffery Young, "Rocky US-Iran Relations Date Back Decades" *Voa News*, published on September 23rd, 2010 <https://www.voanews.com/a/rocky-us-iran-relations-date-back-decades-103726924/126578.html> accessed on June 29, 2022

¹²² Seyed Hossein Mousaviana and Mohammad Mehdi Mousavianb, "Building on the Iran Nuclear Deal for International" *Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Peace and Security*, published in January 22nd, 2018 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/25751654.2017.1420373>, accessed on June 29, 2022.

foreign policy in order to have constructive relations with the world. The US saw the election of president Hassan Rohani as a shift that Iran badly needed for political liberalization and Iran's integration into the international system, particularly after following the "firebrand" extremist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's tough rule and aggressive stance toward the west, particularly the US. President Rohani was familiar that resolving the nuclear issue is the most controversial in order to strengthen Iran's economy and put full stop to Iran's international isolation. He thought he could find a reasonable settlement that would safeguard Iran's nuclear rights while removing them as a barrier to Iran's regional and international participation, rather than taking a severe position toward the West and the US. A successful agreement might potentially lessen Iran's nuclear danger. However, if Tehran is able to obtain real and protracted sanctions relief as a result of the nuclear talks, the likely outcome is a possibly stronger and more powerful Iran than now exists, and one that is viewed with no less distrust by regional powers than it is today.¹²³

As Obama's second term as president got underway, he made changes to his administration. Along with the longstanding US policy of no enrichment in Iran to no nuclear bomb, the trio of Robert Malley as Special Assistant to the President and Middle East coordinator, John Kerry as Secretary of State, and Ernest Moniz as Secretary of Energy.¹²⁴ Otherwise, the agreements would not have been accepted even by the moderate Iranian negotiators.

The US was compelled to engage Iran in nuclear negotiations in large part due to Iran's geopolitical position. Moreover, there was no other way to lessen the threat that Iran poses to US interests in the area, therefore the Obama administration was compelled to involve Iran through diplomacy. US invasion in Iraq and overthrew Saddam's government in 2003, Iraq and Afghanistan's regime-building efforts by the US have been failed, Arab Spring and instability in various states in the Middle East, the Civil war in Syria and Yemen, the

¹²³ Rodger Shanahan, "Iranian Foreign Policy under Rohani", Lowy Institute, published on February 11, 2015, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/iranian-foreign-policy-under-rouhani>, accessed on July 1st, 2022.

¹²⁴ Parsi, T. "War with Iran is Back on the Table – Thanks to Trump." *The Guardian*, published on July 17. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/17/war-with-iran-%A0possible-donald-trump-foreign-policy> accessed on July 1st, 2022.

rise in terrorist organizations and extremist groups in the region and their occupation in various areas in Iraq and Syria, Iran-Saudi rivalry, all of these elements had wreaked havoc on the region, caused civil war, insurgency, sectarianism, and strife. These factors not just put the national security of the US on risk but also hurt its strategic interest in the region.¹²⁵ The Middle East's various problems and geopolitical settings compelled the Obama administration and the Iranian government to reconsider their previous confrontational nuclear policies, develop more cooperative policies. The Obama administration knew that the more the US and Iran could collaborate on regional concerns, The less probable it was that the US would need to initiate yet another war or send more troops to the Middle East.

Excessive Defense Budget weaken US economy

When Obama took charge as the US president, the country was under severe pressure from the worst economic crises since the Great Depression and exhausting overseas military engagement. One of the reasons behind the crippled economy was an excessive military budget. Since the 9/11 attacks, the US foreign policy has tended to use military action to promote its interests rather than deliberate diplomacy. Most people are unaware of the fact that the US military has absorbed the vast majority of the government discretionary budget in these wars.¹²⁶ The war in the Middle East and Afghanistan has cost almost \$6 trillion since 2001 because these wars and nation-building have cost the US dearly in both blood and treasure. The Obama administration has suggested cutting back on defense spending and generally Withdrawing troops from the Middle East. The US defense secretary, Chuck Hagel argued that the US will no longer sizing the military to perform large-scale stabilization operations after the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.¹²⁷

According to the Watson Institute of International and Peace at Brown University report, over 480,000 people have died, including the US troops, civilians, opposition fighters and

¹²⁵ Anderson, S. "Fractured Lands: How the Arab World Came Apart." *The New York Times Magazine*, published on August 11. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/11/magazine/isis-middleeast-arab-spring-fractured-lands.html> accessed on July 1st, 2022.

¹²⁶ "US lesson learned in Afghanistan", *The US Government publishing office*, published on January 15, 2020 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhr38915/html/CHRG-116hhr38915.htm>, accessed on July 2nd, 2022.

¹²⁷ "A Fighting Chance For Obama's Proposed Military Cuts?" *NPR* published March 14, 2022 <https://www.npr.org/2014/03/05/286225875/a-fighting-chance-for-obamas-proposed-military-cuts> accessed on August 27th, 2022

humanitarian aid workers who were killed and destroyed infrastructure.¹²⁸ However, according to US intelligence, the U.S. confronts greater dangers in more areas than at any point since the Cold War. The US forces had already been involved in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, so the Obama administration didn't desire to start another war with Iran instead they preferred to have negotiation with Iran and tried to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions amicably and peacefully.

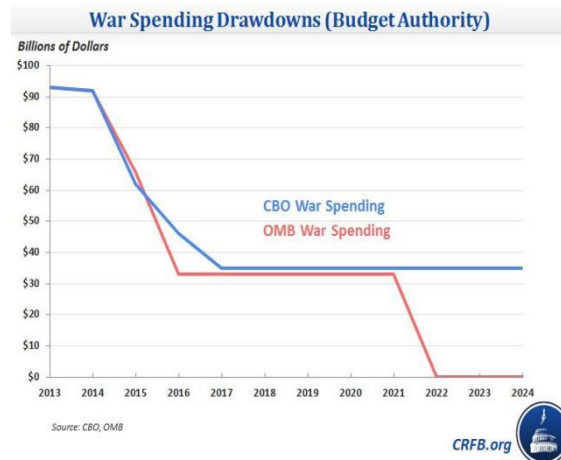


Figure 4: War Spending Drawdowns (Budget Authority) from CRFB.org

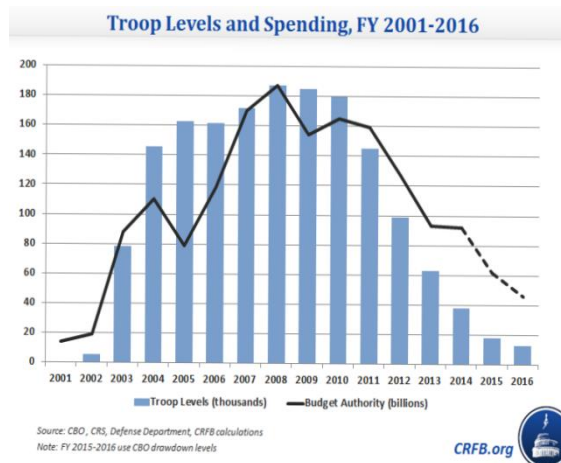


Figure 5: Troop Levels and Spending FY 2001-2016 from CRFB.org

The US war expenditure has routinely surpassed government forecasts. Obama said “Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue,” he said in May 2013.

¹²⁸ "Did the U.S. Really Spend \$7 Trillion on Middle Eastern Wars?" *Committee Responsible Federal Budget*, published on June 21, 2018 <https://www.crfb.org/blogs/did-us-really-spend-7-trillion-middle-eastern-wars> accessed on August 22nd, 2022.

“But this war, like all wars, must end. That’s what history advises. It’s what our democracy demands.” Obama came up with a new defense strategy in which he highlighted changing military priorities and limited the defense budget by 8%. Obama reduced the number of US troops in combat zones from 150,000 to 14,000 and stopped the flow of American soldiers coming home in body bags. The reason behind changing military priorities was that the Obama administration wanted to be consistent with change in the US national security interest and combat other threats emerging in the 21st century. Moreover, Obama didn’t want to continue long destructive wars that were not bringing any fruitful results to the US.¹²⁹ He tried to resolve a tense nuclear standoff with Iran through diplomacy rather than military action. Obama's political career began with a speech he made in Chicago in October 2002, in which he declared his opposition to the George W. Bush administration's planned invasion of Iraq.¹³⁰

Combat veteran Congressman Seth Moulton explains why he is a big supporter of the JCPOA agreement. He argued that military action against Iran would once again endanger American lives to achieve much less than this deal achieves by negotiations. Military action would hinder Iranian nuclear development for a few years, reaffirm its quest for a nuclear weapon and force them to develop the program underground. Both of these choices leave us worse off than we were before the Iran deal. There is no "better agreement" that will prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.¹³¹

Iran’s geostrategic position

Moreover, Iran’s geographic location makes it strategically vital for the world powers. It is a state that is very much of the Middle East but also linked with Central Asia. Central Asia is known as the richest in oil and gas as well as natural and human resources. Since

¹²⁹ By Scott Wilson and Greg Jaffe, "In creating new defense strategy, Obama attempts to outflank Congress" *The Washington Post* published on January 7, 2012 https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/in-creating-new-defense-strategy-obama-attempts-to-outflank-congress/2012/01/06/gIQA1jrQhP_story.html accessed on August 27th, 2022.

¹³⁰ By CHRISTI PARSONS AND W.J. HENNIGAN, "President Obama, who hoped to sow peace, instead led the nation in war", *Los Angeles Times*, published on January 13th, 2017 <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-obama-at-war/>, accessed on July 6th, 2022.

¹³¹ "One Veteran's Perspective on the Iran Deal", *The White House Archives*, published on August on 24th, 2015 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/08/24/one-veterans-perspective-iran-deal>, accessed on July 3rd, 2022.

the fall of the Soviet Union, Central Asia's immense amount of other natural resources, including natural gas, have not yet been fully used. As a result of sanctions on Iran and its isolation from the rest of the world, Russia has been able to block the flow of energy from Central Asia to Europe, making its own oil and gas reserves appear to be stronger. The region is also known as Eurasian Balkan and heartland which plays an important role in the ongoing crucial geopolitical and geo-economic competition in the world.¹³² Iran and Central Asia have significant historical and economic relations that serve as a solid foundation for furthering cooperation. Iran has been further compelled to strengthen its business and security ties with Central Asian republics in order to maintain its economic viability due to its economic and diplomatic isolation from the US. Iran has invested in the construction of transportation routes that include rail links and provide much access to Central Asian goods.¹³³ Iran is trying to expand its infrastructure to become a transit nation for Central Asian energy since it is located between the gas-rich Central Asian states and the West. Moreover, Iran itself has massive oil and natural gas reserves.

In this regard, the Obama administration decided to sign a nuclear deal with Iran and lift up sanctions from Iran that would open up a new stage of development for the US and EU. Iranian gas resources might inspire the EU in achieving its long-term goal of reducing its dependence on Russian gas imports and diversifying its gas supply sources. These are the reasons that created a strong desire in the US Administration and EU to cooperate with Iran in resolving the Middle East crisis, regaining market share in Iranian trade, and peacefully resolving Iranian nuclear problem.¹³⁴

¹³² Dr. Guli Yuldasheva, "The Role of Iran and the United States of America in Geopolitics of Central Asia", *Latvian Institute of International Affairs*, published in 2017 https://www.liia.lv/en/publications/the-role-of-iran-and-the-united-states-of-america-in-geopolitics-of-central-asia-619?get_file=1, accessed July 5th, 2022.

¹³³ Rollie Lal, "Central Asia and Its Asian Neighbors: Security and Commerce at the Crossroads", *Jstore*, published in 2006, pp. 11-18 (8 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg440af.10?seq=1> accessed on July 5th, 2022.

¹³⁴ Seyed Hossein Mousaviana and Mohammad Mehdi Mousavian, "Building on the Iran Nuclear Deal for International Peace and Security", *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, published on January 22, 2018 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/25751654.2017.1420373> accessed on July 6th, 2022.

Obama's strategy was to steer America away from "Bushland," where it served as sheriff, hunted down foes it characterized as the "Axis of Evil," and smashed monsters. Obama disarms its wayward rivals and offers an opportunity for a network of cooperation and coordination to soften them in 'Obama World.'

4.3 US foreign policy towards Iranian Nuclear Deal during Trump administration

A hardliner government in US

President Trump was strong opponent of JCPOA agreement and he has shown his harsh opposition through his strong speeches against Iranian nuclear deal labelling it as terrible, horrible, disastrous, worst and laughable deal that he has seen so incompetently negotiated. Slamming the JCPOA agreement had become the cornerstone of his candidacy for US president. Trump's victory as the US president raised the chances the US could possibly withdraw from the JCPOA agreement and isolated the US from its allies.¹³⁵ Since President Trump took office, he has been working nonstop to dismantle the JCPOA and change the Obama administration's Iran policy. The JCPOA agreement raised serious worries for the Trump administration, who believed that Iran would benefit more from the agreement than the US. Trump has made many moves to undermine the JCPOA, calling it "one of the worst agreements" in history. According to the Trump administration, the agreement provides Iran with extra resources to conduct harmful actions in the area while not limiting Iran's development of ballistic missiles.¹³⁶ On 20th July 2015, UNSC passed resolution 2231 on Iran, forbids weapons exports to or from Iran for five years and includes a voluntary limitation on Iran's development of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles for up to eight years.¹³⁷ Since the Trump administration had some serious concerns regarding the JCPOA deal, on May 8, 2018, President Trump announced the US withdrawal from the JCPOA.¹³⁸ Trump criticized the agreement for failing to include Iran's ballistic missile

¹³⁵ Yeganeh Torbati, "Trump election puts Iran nuclear deal on shaky ground" Reuter published on November 9, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-trump-iran-idUSKBN13427E> accessed on July 20th, 2022.

¹³⁶ Paul K. Kerr, Kenneth Katzman, Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit, Published on July 20th, 2018 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43333.pdf> accessed on July 20th, 2022.

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ Anthony Zurcher, Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran deal, published on May 8th, 2018 [Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran deal - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/usa-45484848) accessed on July 20th, 2022.

program, as well as Tehran's support for groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and its assistance to embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad. He also argued that this agreement gave a political and economic lifeline to Iran's dictatorship.¹³⁹

Trump argued that the Iran nuclear deal did not adequately address the Islamic Republic's potential to develop a nuclear weapon or curtail its "malign conduct." He also signed an executive memorandum to re-impose the sanctions on Iran. He not just imposed sanctions that have been previously lifted by the Obama administration but he also placed secondary sanctions Secondary on any foreign firm that continues to trade with Iran. The executive decision allowed corporations 90 days to withdraw from remaining Iranian exchanges or risk retaliatory US penalties.¹⁴⁰

Trump's move was backed by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who asserted that the Iranian government was enriched and empowered by the deal's relaxation of US sanctions, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), to pursue its aim to destabilize states like Afghanistan, Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere.¹⁴¹ Pompeo, however, argues that Trump's strategy of maximum pressure, which includes the USU pull out from JCPOA agreement in May 2018, the re-imposition of economic sanctions, credible military threats, and initiatives to expose the regime's corruption and human rights abuses, will undo all of this, resulting in a better nuclear deal, isolating Iran, and halting Iran's malign activities throughout the Middle East. Mike Pompeo supported Trump's policy of maximum pressure under which US not just withdraw from JCPOA deal but re-impose of economic sanctions, exposing the regime's corruption and violations of human

¹³⁹ Dawn News, What is Iranian Nuclear deal and why it is being targeted, published on April 30th, 2018 [Undoing of Iran deal? - Newspaper - DAWN.COM](#) accessed July 20th, 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Landler "Trump Abandons Iran Nuclear Deal He Long Scorned" The New York Times published on May 8, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/middleeast/trump-iran-nuclear-deal.html> accessed on July 20th, 2022.

¹⁴¹ Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj, Tougher U.S. Sanctions Will Enrich Iran's Revolutionary Guards, published on October 4th, 2018 [Tougher U.S. Sanctions Will Enrich Iran's Revolutionary Guards – Foreign Policy](#) accessed on July 20th, 2022.

rights, which would result in a better nuclear agreement, isolate Iran, and stop Iran's harmful activities across the Middle Eastern region.¹⁴²

In 2016 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) assures the preliminary obligations of the JCPOA have been met by Iran even Trump's senior administration members like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats, have said that Iran is abiding by its obligations under the agreement.¹⁴³ Despite Iran's full compliance with JCPOA agreement, President Trump opted to withdraw from JCPOA agreement due to his inclination towards US allies in the Middle East like Israel and Saudi Arabia. The US has resumed its age-old policy of containment to drive back Iran, in collaboration with Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).¹⁴⁴ High-level economic sanctions on Iran were imposed after the JCPOA's withdrawal. Steve Mnuchin, the secretary of the Treasury, said in a statement that sanctions will be re-imposed after certain 90- and 180-day "wind-down periods."¹⁴⁵

Trump's unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA agreement and his suspicious attitude towards Iran shows that the ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen, as well as Iran's role in both proxies, are the primary reasons for Trump to put pressure on Iran. Even in July 2018 during the Helsinki summit, President Trump reportedly informed Russian President Vladimir Putin that the US wouldn't withdraw its soldiers from Syria until Iranian forces had withdrawn.¹⁴⁶ President Trump wanted President Putin assistance in countering Iran's influence in Syria

¹⁴² Colin H. Kahl, Pompeo's Dangerous Delusions: What the Trump Administration's Iran Policy Gets Wrong, *Foreign Affairs*, published on October 24th, 2018 [What the Trump Administration's Iran Policy Gets Wrong | Foreign Affairs](#) accessed on July 23rd, 2022.

¹⁴³ "Trump Announces Withdrawal From Iran Nuclear Deal, Will Re-Institute Sanctions" *CBS Colorado* published on May 8th, 2018 <https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/donald-trump-iran-nuclear-deal/>, accessed on July 24th, 2022.

¹⁴⁴ Sanam Vakil, "Iran On The Brink: Challenges And Opportunities For Washington" *Hoover Institute*, published on April 25th, 2018 <https://www.hoover.org/research/iran-brink-challenges-opportunities-washington> accessed on July 24th, 2022.

¹⁴⁵ "Exiting the Deal Part 2: US Treasury on Sanctions" *United states institute of Peace*, published on May 8, 2018 <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2018/may/08/scrapping-deal-ii-us-treasury-sanctions>, accessed on July 24th, 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Amy Mackinnon, "At Helsinki Summit, Putin Likely to Rebuff Any Pressure From Trump on Syria", *Foreign Policy* published in July 5th, 2018 [At Helsinki Summit, Putin Likely to Rebuff Any Pressure From Trump on Syria – Foreign Policy](#) accessed on July 26th, 2022.

by keeping Iranian soldiers away from the Israeli border; his ultimate goal was to withdraw Iranian forces completely from Syria.¹⁴⁷

It's not just the international system that led President Trump to change the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal, but there have been a lot of domestic factors which have become the reason for Foreign policy shift under Trump's presidency. Majority of the policies or strategies that the Trump administration has made are opposite to the Obama administration. Trump has occasionally used highly personal language to describe why he opposes the Iran deal. He frequently made fun of John Kerry, a former secretary of state and one of the deal's architects, making jokes about a bicycle accident that left him with a damaged leg. Since taking office, Mr. Trump has attacked almost all of his predecessor's most notable accomplishments. He had not just announced US withdrawal from JCPOA agreement but within a week of taking office, he had pulled out the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade talks. He declared his intention to remove the United States from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change Mitigation. He also repealed several Obama-era safeguards for unauthorized immigrants.

Roll back Obama policies

President Trump opted for a completely opposite foreign policy approach towards Iranian nuclear deal as compared to Obama's foreign policy approach because he had a burning desire to dismantle Obama's achievements. He was not just rolling back Obama's foreign policy but also blocked the way to return back. Initially he hadn't planned any policy toward Iran but Trump's base of conservative, evangelical supporters favored him when he attacked President Obama over the JCPOA he had signed with Iran. In many ways Trump foreign policy is opposite to Obama foreign policy. Obama during his eight years of presidency faced a lot of constraints to reset the global role of the US in the age of emergence of regional powers and new global challenges by engaging the rival states and working closely with allies. Obama's vision was to win back the losing credibility and maintain the primacy of the US especially when there is threat of emergence of regional

¹⁴⁷ ibid

powers. But Trump's victory was a huge setback to Obama's foreign policy of engagement.¹⁴⁸

Despite other members of the nuclear deal pressure to stay in the deal, president Trump unilaterally announced US withdrawal from the deal. He has often made fun of former Secretary of State John Kerry, one of the agreement's architects, making jokes about a bicycle accident that left him with a broken leg. His unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA stunned most world leaders and was a breach of international law as well as international organizations such as IAEA and the United Nations (UN).¹⁴⁹ President Trump literally took political sledgehammers against his predecessor's legacy. He had not just withdrawn from JCPOA but also stated his intention to remove the US from the Paris Climate Agreement and Trans Pacific Partnership. Moreover, He repealed several Obama-era safeguards for unauthorized immigrants and also put travel restrictions and re-imposed sanctions against Cuba.¹⁵⁰

Role of group dynamics in US foreign policy

President Trump was a visible face who announced the US unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA agreement whereas it is valid to argue that group dynamics have a role in the formulation and implementation of U.S. foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal. There is a small group along with the leader who actively participate in making rational decisions in formulating the foreign policy. This group is made up of individuals, members of Congress, think tanks etc. The Obama administration faced a lot of backlashes and opposition from the Congress members on signing a nuclear deal with Iran. When Trump

¹⁴⁸ Giovanni Grevi, "Lost in transition? US foreign policy from Obama to Trump", *European policy centre*, published On December 2nd, 2016 [Lost in transition \(epc.eu\)](https://www.epc.eu/en/analysis/2016/12/02/lost-in-transition-us-foreign-policy-from-obama-to-trump/) accessed on September 3rd, 2022.

¹⁴⁹ Behrooz Kalantari, "A Comparative analysis of Recent U.S. Policies in the Middle East: Obama vs. Trump" *Madridge Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences*, published on July 17, 2018 https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/81969605/mjbss_1000107-libre.pdf?1646903401=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DA_Comparative_analysis_of_Recent_U_S_Pol.pdf&Expires=1662217977&Signature=Gy58u-wx9l91zSj32SrGZ4u4gc3U3zdHWbwO606IHvDvn6wLWOHX4iNnlvRnhJUlbqQ-icb6JTjoRN35~OLGkJOq1KJW6Mfu1LvVsD3D7hNIHgpgma1mxKbqdBEPjLsS9hqZOW0EjSdnqZEdEsEOSMkS5pV5qpZ3Vi1Ff42eS7E7BgjEf2x~vVStZOM4Q~h5QyWjicUc7l9B4a2u8br62GDARinfdeqwgj2IR9qgz-Uc-Ahu8buCSsPOe23O5MuLqyOKl3AoiWkPkv5pdWLNvHvIqR~DUfDIGSx5GptugBD0dxCCoVwAZ43g0SfYhGq4Djw6zELQLoZzQRJ-Z90keQ_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA accessed on September 1st, 2022.

¹⁵⁰ Anthony Zurcher, "Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran nuclear deal" *BBC News* published on May 8th, 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43902372> accessed on September 1st, 2022.

was elected as the US president, this group became active again and staunchly opposed the nuclear deal and demanded President Trump to pull out the US from this nuclear deal. The evidence for this can be seen from the changes that President Trump made when he took the charge.¹⁵¹

In March 2018 he replaced Tillerson, the Secretary of State, with CIA director Mike Pompeo. When questioned about the causes of his termination, he brought out disagreements with the JCPOA. He mentioned that the JCPOA agreement was awful to them whereas Tillerson considered it acceptable and he had a somewhat different feeling than Trump. On the other hand Mike Pompeo and Trump both have a similar way of thinking towards the JCPOA agreement with a desire to withdraw from it or do something about it.¹⁵²

After a few days an announcement has been made by the White House that General McMaster, the national security advisor would be resigning and succeeded by John Bolton. Bolton was the advisor of President George W Bush and he has a long history of supporting military strikes and hard foreign policy. He was also a strong supporter of the Iraq invasion in 2003. The coalition that was supporting and opposing Iranian nuclear deal has seen a significant shift in the balance of power due to Bolton's tough demeanor and preference for military actions over dialogue. Despite the fact that President Trump fired him as National Security Advisor, he had an impact on Trump decision making and somehow became a reason for influencing President Trump's behavior towards Iranian nuclear issue. The group that opposed the Iranian nuclear deal became more strong and influential under President Trump administration due to the replacement of moderate members with more hardliners. In short the Iranian nuclear deal which was negotiated after a series of steps from President Obama and his administration, became a victim of groupthink.¹⁵³

A Pivot towards Benjamin Netanyahu

¹⁵¹ Sina Abolghasem Rasouli, "The Puzzle of U.S. Foreign Policy Revision Regarding Iran's Nuclear Program" *E-International Relations* published in July 10 2020 <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/07/10/the-puzzle-of-u-s-foreign-policy-revision-regarding-irans-nuclear-program/> accessed on September 1st, 2022.

¹⁵² *ibid*

¹⁵³ *ibid*

President Trump holds Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in high regard. Since he took charge as the President, he has given unconditional support to Netanyahu and strongly opposed the JCPOA agreement. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been vociferously opposed to the pact since its inception and called it as the US historic mistake. He argued that Iran couldn't be trusted at all. According to him Iranian nuclear deal is just based on lies.¹⁵⁴

He argued with this nuclear agreement, Iran would become a wealthy state with hundreds of billions of dollars to spend on terror and aggression, a state that breaks free from international isolation and gains protection from military action." According to him, this nuclear agreement will not prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons or the ability to deliver them to the US and Europe, and that the parameters would give Iran a relief from sanctions and would allow it to continue developing ballistic missile systems which would be a threat for Israel's security. Moreover, Israel has some grave concerns regarding Iran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas. He repeatedly showed his concerns over the nuclear deal and vowed to keep attempting to prevent its ultimate passage. In fact this nuclear attack added tensions between the Obama administration and former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.¹⁵⁵

These gaps continued during President Donald Trump's first year in office, when it was uncertain whether a US president publicly opposed the JCPOA agreement or would prefer to stick with the deal. When Trump initially ran for the presidency, he was not nearly as critical of the Iran deal as he was afterwards. He had always said that the deal was poorly negotiated and was one biggest mistake made by the US but at the same time he said he would be open to keep the US commitments. Even in August 2018 while giving an interview to NBC he said, "It's very hard to say, 'We're ripping it up'". The opposition to the JCPOA agreement arose from Netanyahu's pushing of President Trump to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal in the most Trumpiest way imaginable: by urging the president

¹⁵⁴ Shibley Telhami, "Netanyahu and the Iran nuclear deal: A historic mistake?" *Brookings* published on July 14, 2015 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/07/14/netanyahu-and-the-iran-nuclear-deal-a-historic-mistake/> accessed on July 30th, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ "Israel's Iran documents show nuclear deal 'was built on lies'" *BBC News* published on May 1st, 2018 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43958205> accessed on July 30th, 2022.

to do so by appearing on his favorite TV show, Fox & Friends.¹⁵⁶ Iran has been viewed by Israel's security establishment as a significant threat that has to be contained. Fearing Iran is a religion to Netanyahu.

Role of pressure groups

Moreover, the evangelicals and Southern Baptists who are the backbone of Israel's support in the US because they believe that Christians have a duty to support the Jewish state. Christian Zionists in the US were critical friends for Netanyahu's cabinet during the Trump administration. They supported Netanyahu in lobbying Trump to pull out the US from the JCPOA agreement.¹⁵⁷ The influence of the Israel lobby in US politics cannot be ignored in any discussion of US-Israel relations. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was recognized as the second-most effective lobbying organization in Washington, D.C., by surveys done by Fortune in 1997 and National Journal in 2005, behind the AARP and National Federation of Independent Business.¹⁵⁸

The Israel Lobby is a huge network of Jewish business communities, organizations, think tanks and leading people that have a say in the Congress and that can influence US foreign policy. Another way to define the "Israel lobby" is as a lobby that only represents Israel's interests. The pro-Israel lobby advocates for policies that they feel would benefit the state of Israel, despite the fact that they are not a foreign lobby in the US. The pro-Israel lobby is made up of organizations and individuals who actively work to sway the US foreign policy and public debate in order to further Israel's interests. Israel's influence in the US utilizes its resources to further the success of its campaign, such as giving a campaign fund to assist presidential candidates, congress members and the governmental elites that are

¹⁵⁶ Zack Beauchamp, "Netanyahu went on Fox & Friends to lobby Trump on the Iran deal" *Vox*, published on May 1, 2018 <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/5/1/17306726/netanyahu-fox-and-friends-trump-iran-deal>, accessed on July 30th, 2022.

¹⁵⁷ "Evangelical support for Israel is neither permanent nor inevitable", *The conversation* published on July 19, 2021 <https://theconversation.com/evangelical-support-for-israel-is-neither-permanent-nor-inevitable-164209>, accessed on July 31st, 2022.

¹⁵⁸ ASA Forum <https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/footnotes/jan08/fn14.html> accessed on July 31st, 2022.

pro-Israel. Most of the time, the selected candidates owe the lobbyist organization that sponsored them, and they hardly ever reverse that choice.¹⁵⁹

AIPAC is a centerpiece of these organizations. Although the purpose of AIPAC is to protect congressional allocations for the US financial assistance of Israel, this backing has become uncontroversial and routine. Now the prime objective of the lobby is to align the US foreign policy. The lobby's primary objective has been to more closely match American policy with that of the ultra-hawkish Israeli government, particularly with policies that come from parties like Likud. Regarding Iran, the majority of the lobby's efforts in recent years have been focused on getting the US to agree with Israel that Iran poses a danger to global security and stability.¹⁶⁰

Parts of the pro-Israel lobby opposed to the JCPOA have two options to halt the US participation in the agreement because of the way the Iran Nuclear Deal was structured: block Congress from lifting Iran's economic sanctions or persuade President Trump to withdraw from the agreement and both ended up being successful for pro-Israel lobby. While there is no concrete evidence that the pro-Israel lobby played a role in these choices, there is plenty of proof that they actively worked to limit and thwart the Iran Nuclear Deal.¹⁶¹

One strategy for opposing the Iran Nuclear Deal was to make a direct appeal to the people. Through one of its spin-off organizations, Citizens for a Nuclear-Free Iran, AIPAC committed up to \$40 million to launch advertisements against the agreement. In 23 states, AIPAC and its supporters bought commercials to oppose the Iran Nuclear Deal. The advertising focused on the drawbacks of the Iran Nuclear Deal, notably highlighting Iran's backing for terrorist organizations and the deal's flaws. In the end, these commercials

¹⁵⁹ Edward Tivnan, "The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy" free published on October 1st, 1988

¹⁶⁰ Alireza Ahmadi, "Israel Lobby in the US and Iran-P5+1 Negotiations" *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* published in 2014 sagaremehr@yahoo.com (columbia.edu) accessed on August 8, 2022.

¹⁶¹ Yeganeh Torbati, "Trump election puts Iran nuclear deal on shaky ground" Reuter published on November 9, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-trump-iran-idUSKBN13427E> accessed on July 20th, 2022.

demanded that the Iran Nuclear Deal be annulled. President Trump while giving a speech to AIPAC assured them that his top priority is to dismantle the JCPOA agreement.¹⁶²

Financial contributions are another strategy used by interest groups to sway legislation. These contributions are frequently given to congressional or presidential candidates. Additionally, interest groups frequently provide money to committee and subcommittee chairs and ranking members. Congressional committees members may have a significant impact on how bills are drafted and can help or hinder a piece of legislation from getting to the House or Senate floor. Interest groups frequently track the voting tendencies of certain members of the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committees and apportion funds appropriately.

The Pro-Israel lobby provided financing to many Senate Committee on Foreign Relations members. Although the rationale for supporting particular senators is not made clear; the pro-Israel lobby's priorities are evident from the funding given to members of the House and Senate committees on foreign relations, particularly in the case of the Iran Nuclear Deal. After Obama agreed to the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2016, financing from the pro-Israel lobby increased from \$12 million to roughly \$15.5 million. Although it is difficult to demonstrate that all of these contributions were utilized to undermine or thwart the Iran Nuclear Deal, there is a link between the pro-Israel lobby's spending increasing after it joined the JCPOA in 2015.¹⁶³

4.4 Comparative Analysis on Obama vs Trump's foreign policy towards Iranian Nuclear Deal

This chapter is focused on a comparison of the foreign policy of the Obama and Trump administrations regarding the Iranian nuclear agreement.

¹⁶²ibid

¹⁶³ Ailsa Chnag, "Lobbyists Spending Millions to Sway the Undecided on Iran Deal, NPR pulished on August 6th, 2015 <https://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/08/06/429911872/in-iran-deal-fight-lobbyists-are-spending-millions-to-sway-12-senators> August 1st, 2022.

Shifts in the Foreign policy are most obvious in the National Security Strategies produced under the two presidents' mandates. It includes an ideological approach to foreign policy along with tools and instruments to be followed by each president in its quest to maintain the US position as a global power. The new strategy appears to be the outcome of a shift in the administration's internal balance of power in favor of the US allies in the Middle East and against Iran.

4.4.1 Democrats' vs Republicans

The US has two leading political parties, Democrats and Republicans that play a significant role in foreign policy formulation and implementation. Due to differences in ideologies between both the political parties like liberals and conservatives, both Republicans and Democrats sometimes have clashes on several of foreign policy issues. They differ on which states can be relied upon, and they feel a strong ties with, disagree on the instruments and strategies to use in foreign policy, the advantages of trade and value of the diplomacy, differ on the value of foreign aid, or some disagree over multilateral agreements or follow the rules of international organization in general.¹⁶⁴

The Democratic Party is more liberal in their outlook and they have a motto of "peace through strength". They believe that "war should always be the last choice" and emphasize the importance of "wise diplomacy, development, and economic statecraft." On the other hand, The Republican Party promotes a tough foreign policy backed up by military force. Both political parties have historically held opposing views including political, economic, military and social matters and especially on how the US should conduct its foreign policy, particularly in regard to Iranian nuclear weapons.¹⁶⁵

On Iranian nuclear issue, the Democratic platform supported the JCPOA agreement between P5+1 and Iran while the Republican criticized the deal and called it "a personal

¹⁶⁴ Helen V. Milner, "Sailing the Water's Edge: The Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy", *Princeton University Press* published on September 15th, 2015
<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691165479/sailing-the-waters-edge>, accessed on August 2nd, 2022.

¹⁶⁵ "Democrats vs Republican" http://fhsboyd.weebly.com/uploads/5/5/6/2/5562296/pdfv15_democrat_vs_republican_-_difference_and_comparison.pdf accessed on August 2nd, 2022.

agreement between the president and his kitchen cabinet and not binding on the next president.” The conservative Republican took a hard stance over the JCPOA agreement stating that "it does not have treaty status. Whereas Democrats those who were in a favor of normalizing relations with Iran praises JCPOA agreement for preventing Iran from developing a nuclear bomb, but commits to "strengthen non-nuclear restrictions" if necessary.¹⁶⁶

By the time Obama took office, the crisis over Iran’s nuclear program had entered an extremely difficult phase. The military actions and destructive sanctions on Iran that result in crippled Iranian economy and it not just worsen the US-Iran relations but the US also started losing its credibility in the region. Neither the military strikes nor economic sanctions could stop Iran from its nuclear ambition. Despite tough sanctions and military actions, Iran has shown the world that it doesn’t mind being an international pariah so the only state that could stop Iran is Iran itself.¹⁶⁷

As a democratic president, instead of going towards military strikes, Obama opted for olive branch politics and involved in direct engagement with Iran in order to prevent Congress from imposing destructive sanctions on Iran before the US had exhausted the option of diplomacy with Iran. He chose diplomacy and never ruled over military action against Iran. Obama made a conscious effort to set himself apart from his predecessor and other Republicans by highlighting the significance of direct negotiations with Iran's leadership and "strong personal diplomacy" without limitations. Obama expressed his willingness to lead a serious, coordinated diplomatic effort aimed at changing global perceptions of the US approach to Iran and strengthening the US posture and credibility in the Middle East. On the one hand, the ultimate objective was to apply the principle of "diplomacy first" to the Iranian scenario to demonstrate to the world that the US preferred diplomacy over

¹⁶⁶ Timothy Stafford "How Obama Beat Congress on Iran" RUSI published on September 2nd, 2015 <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/how-obama-beat-congress-iran> accessed on August 2nd, 2022.

¹⁶⁷ Claudia Castiglioni, "OBAMA’S POLICY TOWARD IRAN: COMPARING FIRST AND SECOND TERM" ISPI published on December 2013 https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_220_2013.pdf accessed on August 3rd, 2022.

military strike to curb Iranian nuclear issue. Obama always rejected the Republican president's hardline approach towards Iran.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand we analyze the Republican's approach towards Iranian nuclear issue, they always want to rip up and re-impose the sanctions. According to Pew Research Centre in August 2014 74% of Republicans were not in favor of the JCPOA agreement. In the same survey, 54 % of Americans, including 77 % of Republicans, believe President Obama is not tough enough in his foreign policy towards Iran. In a December 2013 survey, 71% of Republicans disapproved of Obama's handling of the agreement with Iran.¹⁶⁹ According to them, this JCPOA agreement would not stop Iran from uranium enrichment; instead this would free up funds to carry out other activities. They have highlighted a lot of loopholes for example the agreement has failed to address the use of anti-ballistic missile and Iran's support to Hezbollah and Hamas for which the US and UN had imposed sanctions on Iran so when Republican candidate Donald Trump became the president, the first thing he did was announced the US unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA agreement.

4.4.2 Regional Dynamics

During the Obama presidency there were changes in the relationship between the US and the Middle Eastern states because of the Arab spring and Syria Crisis. When the US got involved in the Middle East, they later called failure to plan for the aftermath of the Gaddafi regime the "worst mistake" of Obama's presidency. Moreover, the US hasn't had a coherent foreign policy that would have improved its assistance for the region. The policies of just preserving their interests in the region have been frequently and blindly supported by succeeding administrations, to the point that they were unprepared for a crisis or how to handle it.¹⁷⁰ Failure to manage the region's crisis resulted in US serious credibility problems in the Middle East. The US's direct involvement in the region has consistently

¹⁶⁸ Tabassum Zakaria, Caren Bohan, "Obama's olive branch to Iran turned into sanctions hammer" Reuters published in January 14, 2012 <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-obama-iran-idUKTRE80C2ET20120113> accessed on August 5th, 2022.

¹⁶⁹ JACOB POUSHTER, "Americans (especially Republicans) distrustful of Iran as nuclear deal looms", Pew Research Centre published on March 18, 2015 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/18/americans-republicans-distrustful-of-iran-nuclear-deal/> accessed on August 5th, 2022.

¹⁷⁰ "Arab Spring: when the US needed to step up, it stood back – now, all eyes are on Biden", The Conversation published on February 11, 2021 <https://theconversation.com/arab-spring-when-the-us-needed-to-step-up-it-stood-back-now-all-eyes-are-on-biden-155058> accessed on August 7th, 2022.

resulted in a deterioration of state administration, the empowering of predatory sub-state and non-state actors, and a major increase in violence, civil conflict, and unrest. Meanwhile, the US indirect involvement in the region frequently strengthens authoritarian, corrupt, and anti-democratic forces, as in Egypt, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. The US just has no credibility in the Middle East when it comes to delivering beneficial results. Most Middle Eastern states have an underlying skepticism of the US, which drives broad ambivalence or opposition to U.S. foreign policy failures in the region. Moreover, the Middle Eastern region wracked with wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya in such crises the US couldn't take a risk to initiate another war in the region. The US has already spent \$6.4 billion on wars in the Middle East and the US administration was familiar with the fact that initiating another war with Iran would give considerable cost to the US. It's possible that the war with Iran won't even resemble previous wars in Afghanistan or Iraq. The US government was concerned that Iran may launch ballistic missiles into population centers, provide guided missiles to the Taliban, or launch anti-ship missiles at US warships in the Persian Gulf.¹⁷¹

The US was already so enmeshed in the Middle Eastern Crises that its efforts to destabilize the Iranian regime were unlikely to succeed nor would regime change through external intervention necessarily help the US to address the most pressing issues. Historically, Iran's involvement in various states has threatened the US interests in the region. Moreover, Since the Iranian revolution in 1979, the prime objective of the Iranian government was to spread the revolution to the other parts of the region. Soon after converting Iran into an Islamic Republic, the supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Khomeini said, "We should try to export our revolution to the world...we [shall] confront the world with our ideology". They have started various liberation movements in the Persian Gulf region.

4.4.3 Leadership style and personality

Leadership personality is one of the most important factors in changing foreign policy behavior. Leadership style refers to the behavior of the leader when managing, motivating

¹⁷¹ "THE COSTS OF WAR WITH IRAN: AN INTELLIGENCE PREPARATION OF THE BATTLEFIELD", Small War Journal published on August 31, 2012 <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-costs-of-war-with-iran-an-intelligence-preparation-of-the-battlefield> accessed on August 7th, 2022.

and guiding his team. In 1939, Kurt Lewin, a German-American psychologist, is credited with establishing the basic leadership styles which includes Delegate Leadership, Authoritative Leadership and participative Leadership. Authoritative leadership style is also known as autocratic style in which all authority belongs to a single person and he himself makes important decisions and orders others to follow his instruction.¹⁷² For example Adolf Hitler or Napoleon Bonaparte are some examples of autocratic leaders.

Participative leadership is also known as democratic leadership in which a leader also takes into account the role of his team, he tries to engage his team in the decision making process. Nelson Mandela is one of the best examples of democratic leaders whereas Participative leadership delegates authority to his team. James Buchanan's presidency can be an example of this type of leadership.¹⁷³

If we analyze President Obama's leadership style, he falls under the category of democratic leadership style. His positive, assertive and energetic personality has established a positive new tone in US politics. He appeared to be capable of fostering positive relations between the US and other states. Instead of portraying himself as a president of undefeatable and invincible superpower, he came up with more conciliatory foreign policy.¹⁷⁴ While giving his first interview as a president to Al-Arabiya he said, "my job is to communicate the fact that the Americans are not your enemy" and that "(America) sometimes makes mistakes. We have not been perfect".¹⁷⁵ He campaigned on three concepts throughout his election campaign: Respect! Empower! Include! He said "It's not about me, it's about you!". If we see his foreign policy goals, they are not confined to US interests only but he talks for the whole world. He wanted to improve the US image and engage other states as well as

¹⁷² "Lewin's Leadership Theory Explained" leadership and performance partbners published on June 2nd, 2022 <https://leadershipandperformance.com.au/leadership-development/lewins-leadership-theory-explained/> accessed on August August 19, 2022.

¹⁷³ ibid

¹⁷⁴ Ramin Jahanbegloo, "The Obama Administration and Iran: Towards a Constructive Dialogue" *The Centre for International governance Innovation*, published in June 2009 https://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/wp_43-web_0.pdf accessed on August 16, 2022.

¹⁷⁵ Macleod, Scott, "Obama mideast Watch: The al-Arabiya Interview," Time.com, published on January 27, 2009 <http://mideast.blogs.time.com/2009/01/27/obama-mideastwatch-the-al-arabiya-interview> Accessed on August 19, 2022.

international institutions. Moreover, he integrates his cabinet with formulating and achieving these goals.¹⁷⁶

Since the US is a global hegemon, Obama was more concerned to improve the global image and the credibility of the US in order to maintain the US global hegemony. The only way to gain back the US credibility is through formulating and implementing the policies by resetting its relations with other states. Obama's approach eschewed vindications in favor of exemplarism, combining liberal internationalism, exceptionalism, and moral persuasion with Jeffersonian restraint and a prudential emphasis on power boundaries. He was a globalist who recognized that the power balance was less favorable than what his predecessor had inherited, which restrained him from pursuing liberal policies.¹⁷⁷ Obama attempted to disperse the multiplicity of issues and impediments that hamper US relations with other states. In the case of Iran, both states were experiencing tremendous setbacks that had locked both states into long run enmity. Being a global leader, Obama thought that military action against Iran would be disastrous instead he pursued a smart power approach towards Iran. Obama's ambitions were more modest than Trump's and he had more reasonable objectives than Trump. He viewed the nuclear agreement, or modifying Iran's attitude toward its nuclear ambitions, as a starting point for future changes inside Iran that will influence behavior in the area.

On the other hand, Trump wanted one time overall change. His policies were almost reversed of his predecessor's policies. Obama supported liberal internationalism, multilateralism, globalism but his successor, Donald Trump, chose an isolationist and protectionist approach, creating the possibility that the Republican Party's "America First" strategy may result in America that is more inclined to act alone. His presidency was more in an autocratic style because he himself made the majority of decisions. On several occasions he stated that he was adequate for himself for foreign policy choices which reflected his autocratic leadership style. He withdrew from a lot of agreements including the JCPOA agreement. On several events, he emphasized on "America First" policy and

¹⁷⁷ Stanley A. Renshon · Peter Suedfel, "The Evolving American Presidency" Palgrave macmillan pg. 330 ([The Evolving American Presidency](#)) Stanley A. Renshon, Peter Suedfeld - [The Trump Doctrine and the Emerging International System-Palgrave Macmillan \(2021\) \(1\).pdf](#) accessed on August 10, 2022.

claimed that the US does not share the burden of others without realizing how he was damaging the core values of the US. His main objective was to defend, protect, and preserve their own nationality and citizenry via isolationism.¹⁷⁸ His leadership style demonstrates that, despite political constraints in the US foreign policy apparatus, he has modified the decision-making process to suit his own instincts and ideals. In short, Trump lacked the following successful leadership traits: connecting with others, bringing up the rear humility, acknowledging flaws and blunders, and cooperating.

4.4.4 Leader Perceptions

The intellectual community in the US anticipate every president's the foreign policy even before he is elected as the president of the US, the reason behind it is that during the presidential campaigns every candidate for presidency highlights the importance he will work in future. These campaign slogans do give a look into the president's mindset and potential future foreign policy goals. We can analyze the change in the foreign policies of the US presidents by focusing on how they prioritize their goals and what instruments they use to achieve those goals. It's not just international or domestic factors that bring a shift in the foreign policy but personality aspects and the process of determining on foreign policy are significantly causally related.

According to Jonathan W. Keller, the leadership styles are divided mainly into two broad types: crusaders and pragmatists. 'Crusaders' have set their own political limits, and they are not open to the ideas that contradicts their set views whereas the Pragmatists are sensitive to the surrounding circumstances and political limitations and operate within them.¹⁷⁹ Obama categorically belongs to the second group because if we analyze his foreign policy approach, it exhibits contextual awareness in the form of the relative decrease of US strength and the necessity to craft a foreign strategy that respects that fact.

¹⁷⁸ Associated Press, "Trump Signals Shift from Obama's Focus on Multilateralism" VOX published December 27, 2016 <https://www.voanews.com/a/donald-trump-signals-shift-barack-obama-focus-multilateralism/3653202.html> accessed on August 8th, 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan W. Keller, "Explaining Rigidity and Pragmatism in Political Leaders: A General Theory and a Plausibility Test from the Reagan Presidency" *International Society of Political Psychology* published in June 2009 https://www.jstor.org/stable/25655408#metadata_info_tab_contents accessed on August 22nd, 2022

His acceptance of the JCPOA deal reflected a similar recognition of his authority to make Iran comply with American demands. Although this is by no means a comprehensive study of the July 2015 agreement, it does highlight some key elements of Iranian and US strategy and suggests that each was driven by quite different imperatives. Iranian strategy was heavily influenced by internal political forces, but US policy, notwithstanding the domestic turmoil surrounding the deal, was mostly influenced by 'international' ones.

Since President Obama didn't hail from an aristocratic family. His charisma fostered the impression that his foreign policy was "humane." According to Professor Walter Russel Mead, "Obama appeared more liberal so vacillating, so pleasant, is a more successful neoconservative than his predecessor."¹⁸⁰

The Obama doctrine is based on "Leading from Behind" which served as the cornerstone of Obama's foreign policy. During his inauguration speech he clearly acted as a global protector, he claimed "Know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more".¹⁸¹ His National Security Strategy 2010 focused on the cooperation with allies and reset the US relations with opponent states. He mentioned "Our national security strategy is, therefore, focused on renewing American leadership so that we can more effectively advance our interests in the 21st century".¹⁸² It describes how Obama conducted his foreign policy: by remaining in the background and keeping an eye on what was happening on the main stage of international politics. The US public as well as the international community embraced the moderate and flexible approach of Obama especially in light of the previous administration's interventionist tendencies. If we analyze President Obama's vision of relations in order to achieve the US interest, he adopted a more flexible and moderate foreign policy that was based on direct engagement and diplomacy. His vision was to change the world perception regarding the US image from a

¹⁸⁰ Walter Russell Mead, "W Gets a Third Term in the Middle East" The National Interest, published on August 22, 2011 <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2011/08/22/w-gets-a-third-term-in-the-middle-east/> accessed on August 12, 2022.

¹⁸¹ "Barack Obama's Inaugural Address", The New York Times, published on January 20th, 2009 <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html> accessed on August 8th, 2022.

¹⁸² National Security Strategy, published on May 27th, 2010, p. 41, <https://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2010.pdf> on August 9th, 2022.

state that supports military actions and interventions to a state that promotes diplomacy. Since he was the President of the global power and he considered himself as a global leader, he made efforts to win back the confidence of the allies as well as opponent states so the world once again have faith in the US. Obama attempted to fill the loopholes left by the adversary policy, which other regional powers like Russia and China had exploited against US national interests.¹⁸³ As a result, the military option has been rejected by President Obama in his foreign policy because he wanted to open up new channels for dialogues and negotiations with US adversaries. For example, in the case of Iran Obama opted for a soft stance by signing a JCPOA agreement with Iran.

"Diplomacy first" served as the cornerstone of Obama's foreign policy because Obama believed that in order to achieve the US interest of making the world nuclear free it is important to use diplomacy instead of military action which could help US efforts to persuade Iran to quit its nuclear program. As a result, Obama shifted his foreign policy from his predecessor's policy in blocking negotiations with Iran as a measure of pressure on the Iranian nuclear deal. Even during his speech at Cairo University He stressed the importance of waging a long-term diplomatic effort in the Middle East especially towards Iran. He emphasized the significance of breaking free from the "Trap of the Past" and advancing toward a mutually respectful future. Furthermore, it helped to achieve the Iranian objectives by removing the economic sanctions on it.¹⁸⁴

Although Obama has the same goal like his predecessors to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, Obama never tried to put pressure on Iran by harsh sanctions. The Obama administration tried to have a liberal outlook to resolve the Iran nuclear issue by adopting a moderate approach. Liberals believe in progressivism and the potential of creating peace in international chaos by establishing shared norms and laws. In his statements on the JCPOA, President Obama clearly emphasized these ideas, referencing According to

¹⁸³ Oana-Elena BRÂNDA, "Changes in the American Foreign Policy: From Obama to Trump", *Sciendo*, published on July 25, 2018 <https://sciendo.com/article/10.1515/kbo-2018-0083> accessed August 8th, 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Christian Nunlist, "The legacy of Obama's Foreign Policy", *CSS ETH Zurich*, published in March 2016, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse-188-EN.pdf> accessed on August 9th, 2022.

President Kennedy, "attainable peace" may be achieved by "gradual improvement in human institutions," and he "clearly prefers a peaceful, diplomatic solution".¹⁸⁵ He thought that diplomacy and a coalition of great powers might stop Iran's nuclear development.

On Contrary, President Trump's mindset was quite different from president Obama's. He is business tycoon with an old-school alignment, a reckless frame of mind, and an openly opinionated, bigoted attitude, was paying attention to pressure Iran. Trump has changed the idea of achieving the US goal according to his own vision. He opted for an isolationist foreign policy approach in which he asserted the elimination of the costs of US global leadership. In December 2017, President Trump presented his first National Security Strategy, which stated as its goal the necessity to "make America great again".¹⁸⁶ The US had adopted isolationist policies in the past as well but the problem with Trump's isolationist policy is that he did not propose a traditional "Come Home, America"-style isolationist policy.¹⁸⁷ He therefore questioned the basic core of US foreign policy. He stated on several occasions that he was adequate for himself for foreign policy choices, but it was also difficult for only one person to deal with an important policy known as a nation's foreign policy. His worldview demonstrates his recognition of global strategic rivalry and the primacy of military and economic power as the primary weapons for accomplishing US interests. Instead of striking a deal, Trump believes that to stop Iran from its nuclear ambitions, the US should have increased sanctions.

President Trump has announced unilateral withdrawal from JCPOA agreement shows that Trump's irrational mindset and irresponsible behavior towards the US allies and other members of JCPOA agreement. The withdrawal from the nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran demonstrated that the Trump administration opted for a realistic approach towards Iran. Realists believe that the international system is anarchic where every state

¹⁸⁵ Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal", *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, August 05, 2015 [Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal | whitehouse.gov \(archives.gov\)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/05/remarks-on-iran-nuclear-deal) accessed on September 2nd, 2022.

¹⁸⁶ National Security Strategy of the United States of America, p. I, published in December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, accessed on August 9th, 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Sestanovich, "The Brilliant Incoherence of Trump's Foreign Policy", *The Atlantic*, published on May 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/05/the-brilliant-incoherence-of-trumps-foreign-policy/521430/>, accessed on August 9th, 2022.

tries to maximize its own national interests and security. Realists have a pessimistic view about having progress through international collaboration. President Trump has made similar statements on the US withdrawal from JCPOA agreement. He withdrawal from the deal because he was skeptical about the deal and believed that the US couldn't prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons through peaceful means and this deal was not protecting the US national security interests.¹⁸⁸

4.4.5 Role of Israel Lobby

The most powerful and influential lobby groups in the Congress is the Israel Lobby and power of the lobby analyzed by how it plays a role in the key positions in the US government such as legislature or executive as well as its impact on the foreign policies decision making of the most powerful state. If we take one of the successful examples of the influence of the Israel lobby in US foreign policy we can see how the Israel lobby under President Bush invaded Iraq in 2003. Neoconservative and pro-Israel actors had launched a war campaign to sway public opinion. President Bush has also been under intense pressure to deploy his country's military might to attack Iraq.

Israel Lobby is working quite actively against Iran and has launched a psychological and media battle to spread Iran phobia to make the Iranian nuclear program look like a threat to the world. In spring 2006 meeting, American-Israel Public Affair Committee (AIPAC) targeted Iran as a threat included enormous screens alternating Adolf Hitler denouncing the Jews and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's words, which were interpreted as a threat "to wipe Israel off the map," on one side and a video of Ahmadinejad criticizing the Jews on the other.¹⁸⁹

In order to create a climate of Iran-phobia for any future acts, the organization has started propagandizing against Iran and magnifying its threat to Israel, the region, and the globe.

¹⁸⁸ "President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal", Trump White House Achieves, published on May 8, 2018 [President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal – The White House \(archives.gov\)](https://www.archives.gov/newsroom/2018/05/08/trump-is-ending-united-states-participation-in-an-unacceptable-iran-deal) accessed September 2nd, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Alice Ollstein, "Wandering Jew - Propaganda for the Insipid", Jewish Journal (Los Angeles) March 30, 2006 <https://www.icej.org/news/headlines/aipac-head-compares-iranian-leader-hitler> accessed on August 10, 2022.

The Israel Lobby has attempted to exert pressure on the US to go to war with Iran since George W. Bush took office. The Israel lobby not just highlighted the threats from Iranian nuclear weapons but also pressured the US administrations to impose sanctions on Iran. Despite the opposition from the Israel lobby, President Obama successfully concluded the nuclear deal with Iran. Obama has signed this deal at the expense of its allies in the region such as Saudi Arabia and Israel that consider Iranian nuclear weapons a threat to regional peace and security. Even before the JCPOA agreement was reached, the role of the Israel lobby in the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal was seen as clearly influential. The Moves of President Obama towards the JCPOA agreement was quite alarming for the Israel lobby and they opposed the deal at every stage. They even spoke to various members of congress in an effort to discredit this nuclear deal.¹⁹⁰ President Obama engaged in clash with the lobby over nuclear deal.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The foreign policy is a way in which the state conducts its relations with other states and international institutions. According to the US Department of State, the main objective of the US foreign policy is to make the world a secure, prosperous and democratic that would be beneficial for the US citizens as well as for the international community.

This research has examined US foreign policy in the context of securing the world from nuclear threat by preventing Iran from its nuclear program under the Obama and Trump administrations. The main objective of this research is to compare and critically analyze the foreign policies of both Presidents Obama and Trump towards Iranian nuclear program in order to identify on what grounds their foreign policy differs from each other despite having the same objective. The understanding of the US foreign policy and leader perception was done through the theory of neoclassical realism and proheuristic theory which encompass and explain the US foreign policy towards Iranian nuclear deal.

The US and Iran share one of the most complex and sensitive relationships in the international system. The Iranian nuclear issue remained the top concern that caused tensions between the US and Iran. Although Iran always claims that the program is peaceful

¹⁹⁰ Alireza Ahmadi, "Israel Lobby in the US and Iran-P5+1 Negotiations", Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs published April 1st, 2014 https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/irfa/v5i1/f_0033547_27325.pdf accessed on August 10th, 2022.

but really don't believe that and for ten years the UN and the US have imposed sanctions on Iran. With the departure of President Bush and entry of Obama into the White House gave a shape to US-Iran relations that started to get on the right track of collaboration. He stated in his National Security Strategy (NSS) 2010 that the US faces its greatest threat from weapons of mass destruction, notably from the threat presented by violent extremists seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and their spread to other states. He opted the legacy of his predecessors to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons but instead of using military actions and destructive sanctions he preferred diplomacy.

The P5+1 member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the European Union came together in 2015 on Obama's proposal to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran (EU). In accordance with this agreement, Iran agreed to give up a significant portion of its nuclear program and let UN inspectors to keep an eye on what remained. In return the international community agreed to lift up the sanctions, allowing Iran to do business, sell its oil to the international market in order to recover hundreds of billions of dollars of frozen assets in banks abroad.

Although both states do not have a good experience in the past, Obama's direct engagement approach towards Iran has opened a way for negotiation and diplomacy. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, none of Obama's predecessors tried to normalize relations with Iran. One of the reasons behind this was Iran was also governed by hardliners and both side administrations were quite rigid. Their stance towards each other. The moderate governments of Hassan Rohani in Iran and Barack Obama in the US had an opportunity to forget their past hatreds and break the ice which was quite successfully accomplished by both the states. The Iranian government and citizens both were suffering from the military actions and destructive sanctions imposed by the US. Moreover these sanctions have deprived Iran's access to get benefits from the global market. On the other side, the US was also losing its credibility due to its hawkish approach. The JCPOA agreement between P5+1 has normalized the relations between Iran and the US.

However, not everyone was happy with this deal because they were bothered by the fact that many of the deal's key provisions expire in 10, 15 and 25 years. Trump's erroneous view regarding the agreement has destroyed most of Obama's accomplishments and shattered hopes for resolving the US's long-standing hostility with Iran. The US reckless

behaviors and unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA agreement once again heated tension between both the states. According to Trump, the JCPOA agreement was flawed and Iran is not a reliable state for negotiation. He argued the deal didn't cover Iran's ballistic missile program. Moreover, Iran's behavior across the Middle East and its involvement in the wars in Syria and Yemen is not acceptable.

The US foreign policy saw a shift towards Iranian nuclear deal under Trump's presidency, his behavior towards Iran was quite strange, this may be because the majority of hawks around him were anti-Iran. He announced the withdrawal from the deal because he thought this deal was favoring Iran more than the US. He put maximum pressure and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran with an explicit aim to isolate Iran from the rest of the world.

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