



US Foreign Policy towards Iran under Obama and Trump Administration

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Abstract

This article has analyzed the foreign policy of America towards Iran since WWII. It has also described the dramatic shift in American behavior and policies towards Iran after 1979 with great emphasis on Obama and Trump presidency. Obama administration tried to break the ice and somehow successfully accomplished the most difficult task; bringing Iran on the table for nuclear deal P5+1. This paper deals with Obama's policies during his first and second term and how Trump reviews whatever was done by Obama with special focus on JCPOA. The concerns of the United States' allies and Trump's reckless behavior are creating so many problems for Iranian people and the investors. If America will not pay heed on what she is missing, Iran will have to incline towards anti-US stance.

Keywords: P5+1, JCPOA, America, Iran, Nuclear deal, Trump

1 Introduction

Tehran and Washington's relation of dependence dates back at the end of World War II. At that time, Tehran called for help to United States to rescue her from the foreign and illegitimate intervention of the then great powers; Britain and France. The honeymoon period was later assisted by the exchange of soft power tools; United States sent her advisors to train police and army in Iran. Later on, these relations bore an immense shock which was absorbent in nature at that time but sent shockwaves afterwards; the removal of the nationalist leader-Muhammad Mosaddegh. The seeds of anti-US sentiment were dormant from the military coup to the revolution. United States had different approaches vis-a-vis Iran during different periods. During cold war, United States was very vigilant about the intentions of Soviet expansion and protected each and every country having potential threat from USSR. Iran was also one of those countries which were sensitive targets for USSR.

Truman's policy towards Iran was very cautious because any single mistake could lead towards the loss of Iran and United States was not willing to surrender strategically such an important territory to USSR. Eisenhower's policies were multi-dimensional with a border variety of policy instruments. Truman and Eisenhower wanted to keep countries in their camp by giving them financial assistance while Kennedy was a strong advocate of self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the countries in Western bloc. Nixon was the friend of Shah of Iran and obviously had a soft corner for Iran. He provided the required military assistance against the potential Soviet threat. Carter admired Shah of Iran and called Iran as the island of stability. Later, during

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his regime, Iran witnessed Islamic revolution of 1979 which provided the fertile environment to the dormant seeds of anti-US sentiment. The new-era of US-Iran relations began with a lot of hatred and criticism on both wings. Many events shaped US-Iran relations afterwards; the Iran-Contra scandal, Iran-Iraq War then oil and trade sanctions imposed by Bill Clinton, Tehran's accusation of sponsoring terrorism, Iran's controversial nuclear program and its hostile behavior towards Israel and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Bush's administration was hardliner, when it came to Iran but Obama had presented quite different stance during his election campaign. He addressed the Iranian question in a very positive way; he always talked politely about Iran and made genuine efforts in bringing Iran to the table. Iran's talks with P5+1 during Obama's first term ended up in deadlock because of the swap proposal. Rouhani's victory and departure of Ahmadinejad made enough room for positive future developments. Later on, Obama and Rouhani along with other global powers signed first Joint Plan of Action (JPA) and later Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Obama's successor, Donald Trump, withdrew from JCPOA by saying that this agreement is contrasting to United States' national interests. Trump re-imposed sanctions against Iran but with allegedly soft corner. United States and Iran's relations are often troubled by United States' allies in the Centre East, because of the oil factor and Iran's hegemony over strait of Hurmuz.

2 Brief History of US-Iran Relations

US-Iran confrontational relations dates back in 1979's Islamic revolution, this Islamic revolution was the product of many different segments of society; students, communists, liberals, and Islamists among many others.² Before 1979, Iran was the most trusted ally of United States in Middle East as the Shah of Iran, Raza Shah Pehlevi, was loyal to United States of America, albeit the majority of the population of Iran was anti-US. This anti-US sentiment dates back to the western aided 1953's military coup in which the nationalist Leader-Muhammad Mosaddegh was deposed by his military officers. Before that coup, United States and Iran had really good memories to share. During WWII, Britain and USSR intervened in Iran in order to counter Germany by using Iranian land to supply weapons to Russia. After the war was over, both, the great powers repudiated to leave Iran. At that time Iran called United States for help, which later resulted in an agreement among the participants of the conflict; Britain and France. The agreement stated that both of the powers will relinquish troops from Iran within six months. In this honeymoon period, which was started after WWII, the bilateral relations were assisted by United States' courtesy to send her advisors and experts to Iran in order to train the Iranian military and police.

Iran was supported by United States because of its important geo-strategic location; on one hand large border with Russia (United States' former adversary) and Persian Gulf on the other. During the Cold War Truman's Iranian policy was very vigilant because even a tiny slip up might provoke USSR and that could result in the loss of Iran; mainly its large oil reserves. Truman's policies were very cautious because of Korean War of 1953; he was shrewd enough to predict that Soviet Union can attack the fragile regimes like Iran. Truman administration's policy toward Iran between late 1950 and early 1952 was centered on the mission to keep Iran out of the

²Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran's Crumbling Revolution," Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2003-01-01/irans-crumbling-revolution>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

Soviet orbit without making any military commitment or unduly infuriating a close ally during a time of bewildering global danger; cold war. Western military weakness and the Eisenhower's policy continued the more unilateral approach (begun by Truman in late 1952) a policy that made possible in large measures the dramatic shift in the balance of military power between the United States and the Soviet Union.³ The Truman administration by late 1952 was willing to consider the use of force to achieve its goals in Iran, a shift that allowed a far more assertive policy, the administration was also willing to intervene directly in Iran to stabilize the political situation, if such action advanced U.S. strategic goals.⁴

In general, the argument is that the Eisenhower administration was ready to act more "aggressively," employing "a broader variety of policy instruments, including covert action" than the Truman administration had been.⁵ The most recent account argues that Eisenhower and Dulles "were ideologically predisposed to covert operations."⁶ As the Mosaddegh was against the United States' interests in Iran, so, U.S. officials recognized that quiet diplomacy was not going to resolve the dispute, which later resulted in 1953, military coup.⁷ After the dismissal of Muhammad Mosaddegh, United States urged shah to sign, "Atoms for Peace" in 1957 under Eisenhower administration.⁸ United States policy towards Iran was under the influence of the containment of Soviet Union (USSR) because of the bipolar world and had least effect of personalities of the presidents. John F. Kennedy had also shown flexibility towards Iran and had given aid in order to save the developing country to fall in USSR's bloc. Unlike others, JFK was extremely cautious about his spending in developing countries and the countries which were having the potential threat of falling prey to communism ideology. In case of Iran, He formed task forces to have a clear picture of USSR threat to Iran. Eisenhower had been willing to use large sums of American dollars to keep such countries as Iran and Jordan within the western camp, Kennedy hoped to make them more self-reliant and willing partners through shared values and democratic systems.⁹ During Nixon presidency, individual source shaped US-Iran relations as the Nixon was the friend of Raza Shah Pehlevi.

As a friend of the Shah, President Nixon placed great emphasis on Iran's role in the Persian Gulf. He accepted the Shah's claim that Iran was the only reliable United States ally

³Francis J. Gavin, Politics, Power, and U.S. Policy in Iran, 1950-1953, <https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~hpcws/gavin.pdf>. Retrieved on 4th January 2018.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mark J. Gasiorowski, U.S. foreign policy and the Shah. New York: Cornell University Press, 1991, p.82-83

⁶ Mary Ann Heiss, Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil, 1950-1954. New York: Columbia, 1997, p. 82-83.

⁷ Theodore L. Leonhardt, Desperate Measures: Truman, Eisenhower, and the Lead-up to Operation Ajax, https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/10211/Leonhardt_Thesis_Archive.pdf;sequence=1. Retrieved on 4th January, 2019.

⁸ Steeve Inskip, Born In The USA: How America Created Iran's Nuclear Program, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/18/440567960/born-in-the-u-s-a-how-america-created-irans-nuclear-program>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

⁹April R. Summit, "Perspectives on Power: John F. Kennedy and U.S.- Middle East Relations" (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2000), p. 36.

between Europe and Japan. During May 1972 meetings with the Shah in Tehran, however, Nixon made two commitments of far-reaching importance.¹⁰ Congruently, Johnson's administration, Nixon's White House believed from the outset that Iran's role in the alliance system, particularly its strategic position in the Persian Gulf, justified United States arms sales to Tehran.¹¹ First, contrary to his advisors' counsel, Nixon agreed to provide laser bombs, F-14 and F-15 aircraft, and more air force technicians-in short, "all available sophisticated weapons short of the atomic bomb, (in history it is known as Blank cheque) "and the second commitment was the aid to Iraqi Kurds.¹²

Carter's policy towards Iran during the final phase of the Shah's rule has been referred to as his 'most glaring and costly [foreign policy] inconsistency'.¹³ This could be best summarized in the New Year's Eve toast Carter delivered in 1977 in Tehran where he toasted the Shah for turning Iran into an 'island of stability' and for deserving 'the respect and the admiration and love which your people give to you'.¹⁴

Later on, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini-the religious leader and fierce critic of Shah, he was in exile in Iraq from where he directed the revolution of 1979 in Iran against Shah and his promotion of western imperialism. Khomeini returned from exile after the revolution and took control of Iran and US-backed Shah was compelled to flee to Egypt. The new government terminated its membership in Baghdad Pact (also known as CENTO, designed to contain Soviet expansion), 63 American hostages were sized by Iranian students for 444 days, and 52 of them were released in 1981.¹⁵ Iran-Iraq war started after almost 3 years of revolution. The Reagan Administration secretly decided to provide highly classified intelligence to Iraq in the spring of 1982- more than two years earlier than previously disclosed- while also permitting the sale of American-made arms to Baghdad in a successful effort to help President Saddam Hussein avert imminent defeat in the war with Iran, former intelligence and State Department officials say.¹⁶

From 1979 to onwards, many issues impeded the positive developments regarding the US-Iran relations, the Iran-Contra scandal, Iran-Iraq War then oil and trade sanctions; imposed by Bill Clinton, Tehran's accusation of sponsoring terrorism, Iran's controversial nuclear program and

¹⁰Roham Alvandi, Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: the origins of Iranian primacy in the Persian Gulf, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/217850.pdf>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

¹¹Andrew Scott Cooper, *Fateful Consequences: U.S.-Iran Relations during the Nixon and Ford Administrations, 1969-77*, (PhD diss., Victoria University of Wellington, 2012) p. 118

¹² Ibid.

¹³Robert W. Murray and Stephen McGlinchey, *The Reluctant Realist: Jimmy Carter and Iran*, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/09/the-reluctant-realist-jimmy-carter-and-iran/>, Retrieved on 4th January 2019

¹⁴Peter L. Hahn, *How Jimmy Carter lost Iran*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/10/22/how-jimmy-carter-lost-iran/?utm_term=.1b78b03c51b1. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

¹⁵ Aljazeera, *Timeline: Iran-US relations*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/iranaftertherevolution/2009/02/2009249123962551.html>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

¹⁶Seymour M. Hersh, *U.S. Secretly Gave Aid to Iraq Early in Its War against Iran*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/26/world/us-secretly-gave-aid-to-iraq-early-in-its-war-against-iran.html>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

its hostile behavior with Israel and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which are United States major allies in Centre East. In September 2000, Madeleine Albright, the United States' secretary of state, met Kamal Kharrazi-Iranian foreign minister (1997-2005), at the United Nations for the first talks since the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979.¹⁷ In later years, Iran was blamed to have nuclear weapons program and in response to these allegations, Iran agreed to United Nations' inspection of its nuclear facilities and to suspension of its uranium enrichment.

In 2008, Barack Obama won presidential elections and throughout his campaign, he talked about 'change' and Iranians were enthusiastic about his victory, Ahmadinejad congratulated Barack Obama for his victory in elections. In his inaugural speech, Obama addressed the Muslim world directly, "to the Muslim world, [I say] we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect,"¹⁸ Iranians considered that this statement was directed at them but hostile relations between both states left a large room for doubt. Following an Iran policy review by the new Obama administration, the United States announces that it would participate fully in the P5+1 talks with Iran, a departure from the previous administration's policy, requiring Iran to meet UN demands first.¹⁹ Then Iran and P5+1 met in Istanbul for first round of talks, then in Almaty for second round of talks and then finally in Geneva for continued negotiations. In October 2015, Iran and the P5+1 formally adopt the nuclear deal. Iran begins taking steps to restrict its nuclear program, the United States issued waivers on nuclear-related sanctions to come into effect on implementation day and EU announces it passed legislation to lift nuclear-related sanctions on implementation day.²⁰ In 2017, Trump took the office and pull United States of America out of P5+1 agreement and threatened Iran to re-impose sanctions in November 2018 but later United States showed some flexibility towards Iran.

3 Obama's Policies towards Iran

By the time, Obama's administration was in charge, they had to review the previously perceived Iranian question. As, the Bush administration had quite rigid stance towards Iran. The P5+1 negotiation, the suggestions regarding the suspicious Iranian enrichment activities and considering it as illegitimate caused the deadlock between the adversaries; United States and Iran. This deadlock later, resulted in Congress stressed White House to review the sanctions already in place against Tehran. During his first campaign for 2009 elections, Barack Obama talked about the change, analysts and policy makers saw Obama in office as the window of opportunities for breaking the ice between both Iran and United States' relationship. Obama's openness to negotiate directly was contrasting to his predecessors such as George W. Bush whose administration's main focus was on the isolation and ignorance of Iran. While, the relationship has never been a cakewalk, still there was an indication of rapprochement during Barack Obama's era, albeit normalization was still far away. Obama's speech in Cairo: A new beginning showed his optimistic intentions towards the adversary; Iran,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Robert Satloff, President Obama Speaks to the World's Muslims: An Early Assessment, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/president-obama-speaks-to-the-worlds-muslims-an-early-assessment>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

¹⁹ Arms control association, Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy With Iran, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran>. Retrieved on 4th January 2019.

²⁰ Ibid.

“There will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect”.²¹

Later, in the beginning of his second term, Barack Obama talked about the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means, the following passage from his first State of the Union address as re-elected president stated that,

“We will show the courage to try and resolve our differences with other nations peacefully not because we are naïve about the dangers we face, but because engagement can more durably lift suspicion and fear”.²²

Despite all these encouraging statements and intentions to negotiate with Iran, Obama never ruled out the use of military as an option against Iran in case of futile negotiations. Though, he was against the weaponization of Iran and was the strong advocate of Iran as non-nuclear weapon state, still he talked about sitting on the table for future settlements, rather than, using hard power against Iran. In March 2009, Obama reached out to Iran in a video message offering ‘new beginning’, the president strongly affirmed that the United States wanted the Islamic Republic of Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations, a place that could not be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions that demonstrate the true greatness of the Iranian people and civilization.²³

Senior American and Iranian officials held one-to-one talks in Geneva for negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, marking the most substantive bilateral contact between the two countries for 30 years.²⁴ The talks lead to a preliminary agreement on the so-called Fuel-Swap proposal: in return for a supply of fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor, Iran would ship out an equivalent amount of uranium enriched to 4%, totaling about 1,200 kilograms, accounting roughly 80% of Iran's low-enriched-uranium (LEU) stockpile at that time.²⁵ The optimism in the air was soon vanished away because of the meeting in Vienna, where Iran asked for the international granters and the Iranian negotiators were not sure about the possible unified reaction of the talks at home. The Iranian government didn't respond the Swap proposal because of the division at home which resulted in the collapsed negotiations.

Iranian met the United States-delegations headed by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Obama was of his view that the diplomacy should not be restricted to nuclear deal only but should be exercised in other matters of great concern just like, Iran's role in the region, its involvement in Syrian dossier, support of Hamas and Hezbollah, relations with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Israel. From mid-2010 to 2012,

²¹ White House archives, O President Obama's Speech in Cairo: A New Beginning, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/NewBeginning/transcripts>, Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²² New York Times, Obama Confronts Americans' Fears in State of the Union Speech, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/13/us/politics/obama-state-of-the-union.html>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²³ The guardian, Barack Obama offers Iran 'new beginning' with video message, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/20/barack-obama-video-iran>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²⁴ Julian Borger, Nuclear talks lead to rare meeting between US and Iran, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/01/iran-nuclear-geneva-talks>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²⁵ Julian Borger, Iran agrees to send uranium abroad after talks breakthrough, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/01/iran-uranium-enrichment-plant-inspection>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

Obama administration did not launch any major policy to address the Iranian crisis, because of presidential elections and other important and historical events in the world; Arab Spring in Middle East and death of Bin-Laden in Pakistan in 2011. Two years after Obama took office domestic and international constrains, bad timing, and some weaknesses in his overall strategy irritated his hard work, turning him in what has been described as a “progressive pragmatist”, progressive when possible, pragmatist when necessary.²⁶ In April 2013, P5+1 once again met after two years following the failure of Swap proposal and agreed to work on step by step process with reciprocal actions of confidence building.²⁷ When Obama took office for his second term, Iranian prime minister’s office was also won by a moderate leader and a strong advocate of engagement; Hassan Rouhani. His victory sent the wave of buoyancy towards the path of bilateral diplomacy. Obama called Rouhani directly; the first direct talk of Iranian and American leaders since the Islamic revolution of 1979. Rouhani said that,

"Step by step, we will build confidence between our presidents and our countries, with sufficient will on both sides – and I assure you that on Iran's side the will is 100% – the nuclear file will be resolved in a short period of time."²⁸

Rouhani denied any sort of constrains at his back while sitting for negotiations by saying that,

"My government has full authority in these negotiations with support from all three arms of government as well as the people of Iran. I have complete backing."²⁹

Rouhani appointed Javed Zarif (American-educated man) as his foreign minister, who met Catharine Aushon (EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy) at Geneva where both adversaries agreed to continue the P5+1 negotiation and later resulted in JPA (Joint Plan of Action). Iran abide by almost all the conditions of Joint Plan of Action and its sincerity to the agreement was confirmed by IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) in later months. In 2014, praising President Rouhani and the historical interim agreement that had recently been negotiated, President Obama, commented that “if Iran seizes this moment, this Nowruz could mark not just the beginning of a new year, but a new chapter in the history of Iran and its role in the world – including a better relationship with the United States and the American people, rooted in mutual interest and mutual respect.”³⁰

²⁶ Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michael E. O'Hanlon, Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive Pragmatist Tries to Bend History, Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy: A Progressive Pragmatist Tries to Bend History, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23217964>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²⁷ NTI, Nuclear Iran, <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/iran/nuclear/>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²⁸ Dan Roberts, Julian Borger, Obama holds historic phone call with Rouhani and hints at end to sanctions, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/27/obama-phone-call-iranian-president-rouhani>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The White House, Statement by President Obama on Nowruz, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/20/statement-president-obama-nowruz>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

On July 14, 2015, Iran and the six powers that had negotiated with Tehran about its nuclear program since 2006 (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany—collectively known as the P5+1) finalized a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).³¹ This Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) let Iran to acquire nuclear technology but for civil purposes only and in return, Iran will be freed from sanctions imposed by the European states; Britain, France, Germany and the super power; United States. While Obama could veto sanctions bills, which he consistently threatened to do. He could not prevent actions such as a March 2015 letter by 47 Republican senators to the “leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” warning that any deal reached with Obama would be futile as it could be undone with a “stroke of the pen.”³² Obama and Rouhani’s mutual efforts put the relations on the track were somehow successful. Iranian opponents were not happy so far, Saudi Arabia and Israel were not happy by US-Iran cooperation. Israel was not the only foreign state attempting to scuttle the negotiations either, with Saudi Arabia massively increasing its lobbying apparatus in Washington during the nuclear engagement period.³³ A 2016 Al Monitor report revealed that Saudi Arabia “more than doubled its already hefty lobbying budget” in 2015, in large part to prevent a nuclear deal.³⁴ The Israeli-Saudi cause has received a terrific setback, a determined campaign to derail the agreement may well have just begun.³⁵

During nuclear engagement, the Obama administration signaled that it was prepared to change the underlying dynamic of the U.S.–Iran relationship, the administration’s rhetoric during the talks bestowed a level of legitimacy on the Iranian government and its regional and international role that was always lacking from previous U.S. presidents.³⁶ Obama’s generous attitude towards Iran, his opposition of Congress with hardliner stance over sanctions on Iran, sincere efforts of taking Iran to the table while regarding United States’ allies’ concerns of nuclear Iran, he finally made the bilateral relations to be on a proper track with no apparent hurdles on it. Obama during his election campaign addressed Iran and later showed good-will gestures. After, Rouhani’s joining of the office, it was easy for Obama to move towards the future with no hostilities at all. Obama and Rouhani played extremely significant role in changing the narrative from “Great Satan” and “Axis of Evil” towards the signatories of mutually discussed agreement. Iran and the United States have serious differences remaining on issues related to terrorism, human rights, weapons of mass destruction, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and the region. At the same time, they have many common interests such as the fight

³¹ Paul K. Kerr, Kenneth Katzman, Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43333.pdf>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³² Peter Baker, G.O.P. Senators’ Letter to Iran About Nuclear Deal Angers White House, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/10/world/asia/white-house-faults-gop-senators-letter-to-irans-leaders.html>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³³ Seyed Hossein Mousavian & Sina Toossi, Assessing U.S.–Iran Nuclear Engagement, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1370332>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³⁴ Julian Pecquet, Lobbying 2016: Saudis spend big to stabilize rocky relationship with United States, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/saudis-spend-big-for-stability.html>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³⁵ Pervez Hoodbhoy, Saudi-Israel anti-Iran nexus, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1173777>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³⁶ Seyed Hossein Mousavian & Sina Toossi, Assessing U.S.–Iran Nuclear Engagement, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1370332>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

against ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups, and even prominent U.S. strategists such as Henry Kissinger have described the two countries as “natural allies.”³⁷

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions was widely criticized as imperfect deal still it was implemented in January 2016, the same year of United States’ presidential campaign. However, many observers have hailed the 2015 pact as a commendable example of multilateral diplomacy that averted a potentially disastrous new confrontation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, as the feelers coming out of Washington indicate, that confrontation may very well be back on track.³⁸

This deal was mainly criticized by Republican candidate Donald J. Trump; he used to say that, “This is the worst deal ever”.³⁹ After joining the office Trump started reviewing the deal, he had a hardcore stance that, he will continue to waive some sanctions against Iran, a key aspect of the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration and five other world powers.⁴⁰

4 Trump Policies towards Iran

Trump administration had deep concerns about Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that this deal is not securing the United States’ interests as it is providing, Iran, and a sigh of relief. The relaxation provided under the accord gives Iran additional resources to conduct “malign activities” in the region, and does not restrict Iran’s development of ballistic missiles.⁴¹ Resolution 2231, which was adopted in July 2015, prohibits arms transfers to or from Iran, but only for five years, and contains a voluntary restriction on Iran’s development of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles for only up to eight years.⁴² President Trump announced on 8th May 2018 the withdrawal of United States from JCPOA.⁴³ Trump criticizes the deal for not including Iran’s ballistic missile program or Tehran’s support of groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and its aid of embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad. He also has criticized the fact the deal’s terms expire, he said the accord “threw Iran’s dictatorship a political and economic lifeline”.⁴⁴

Mike Pompeo, secretary of state defended Trump’s action by asserting that, the loosening of U.S. sanctions under the deal enriched and enabled the Iranian regime—and the Islamic

³⁷NBC News, Meet the Press Transcript - October 12, 2014, <https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-transcript-october-12-2014-n224126>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³⁸ Dawn News Editorial, Undoing of Iran deal, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1404777>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

³⁹Andrew Buncombe, Iran nuclear deal: What happens now Donald Trump has pulled the US out of accord? <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-iran-nuclear-deal-explained-what-happens-us-a8340386.html>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

⁴⁰Merrit Kennedy, “Trump Administration Upholds Iran Sanctions Waiver, Keeping, Nuclear Deal Alive”, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/17/528806647/trump-administration-upholds-iran-sanctions-waiver-keeping-nuclear-deal-alive>. Retrieved on 5th January 2019.

⁴¹Paul K. Kerr, Kenneth Katzman, Iran Nuclear Agreement and U.S. Exit, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43333.pdf>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³Anthony Zurcher, Three reasons behind Trump ditching Iran deal, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43902372>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁴⁴ Dawn News, What is Iranian Nuclear deal and why it is being targeted, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406391>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in particular—to more aggressively pursue its destabilizing agenda in Afghanistan, Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere.⁴⁵ In contrast, Pompeo contends that Trump’s policy of “maximum pressure”—including the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear agreement in May 2018, the re-imposition of economic sanctions, credible military threats, and efforts to expose the regime’s corruption and human rights abuses—will reverse all this, producing a better nuclear deal, isolating Iran, and rolling back Iran’s nefarious activities across the Middle East.⁴⁶

Despite of the Iran’s full compliance with JCPOA and even the assurance of IAEA(International Atomic Energy Agency) Trump decided the withdrawal from the agreement mainly because his tilt towards Saudi Arabia and Israel. In concert with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Washington has resurrected its age-old policy of containment to push back Iran, age-old policy of containment to push back Iran.⁴⁷ Withdrawal from JCPOA was followed by the high level of economic sanctions on Iran. In a statement, Secretary of the Treasury Steve Mnuchin states that sanctions will be reimposed subject to certain 90 day and 180 day "wind-down periods."⁴⁸ “Sanctions will go into full effect and will remind the Iranian regime of the diplomatic and economic isolation that result from its reckless and malign activity,”⁴⁹

The second round of sanctions on Iran started in November last year. These sanctions are called as the toughest sanction ever as these intended to hit the oil market and Iranian deteriorating financial condition. The current phase of sanctions is intended to upset the oil market, Iran's primary source of revenue, thus, the effectiveness of the sanctions will be measured largely by the scale of the revenues the Iranians collect from their oil, it also depends on the ability of the United States to bring the scale of Iranian oil exports to "zero" and maintain sustainable oil prices, counter to Iranian expectations.⁵⁰ “The Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into, “Today, we have definitive proof that this Iranian promise was a lie,” he added. “The fact is, this was a horrible one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made. It didn’t bring calm. It didn’t bring peace, and it never will.”⁵¹

⁴⁵Esfandyar Batmanghelidj, Tougher U.S. Sanctions Will Enrich Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/04/irans-revolutionary-guard-corps-wont-suffer-from-stronger-u-s-sanctions-theyll-benefit-irgc-trump-sanctions/>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁴⁶Colin H. Kahl, Pompeo’s Dangerous Delusions: What the Trump Administration’s Iran Policy Gets Wrong, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2018-10-24/pompeos-dangerous-delusions>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁴⁷Sanam Vakil, Iran On The Brink: Challenges And Opportunities For Washington, <https://www.hoover.org/research/iran-brink-challenges-and-opportunities-washington>. Retrieved 6th January 2019.

⁴⁸United States Institute of Peace, Exiting the Deal Part 2: US Treasury on Sanctions, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2018/may/08/scrapping-deal-ii-us-treasury-sanctions>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁴⁹ Dawn News, Trump tears up Iran nuclear deal, revives sanctions, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406529>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁵⁰Sason Hadad, Tomer Fadlon, The Second Round of Sanctions against Iran: The Impact on Iran and the Global Oil Market, <http://www.inss.org.il/publication/second-round-sanctions-iran-impact-iran-global-oil-market/>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁵¹ Dawn News, Trump tears up Iran nuclear deal, revives sanctions, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406529>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

Trump's suspicious behavior towards Iran is indicating that the ongoing war in Syria and Yemen and Iran's presence in both proxies is the significant factor that why Trump is pressurizing Iran. Mr. Trump told Russian President Vladimir Putin at their Helsinki summit last week that he would not pull US troops out of Syria until Iranian forces had left, according to gulf sources.⁵² Mr. Trump had wanted Russian help to counter Iran's influence in Syria by keeping Iranian forces away from the Israeli border, his ultimate ambition is for them to withdraw altogether.⁵³ The Trump administration's current approach to Iran has little in common with the carefully calibrated approach President Ronald Reagan actually took toward the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ President Donald Trump's administration nonetheless issued eight exemptions from its demand on all countries to stop buying Iranian oil in November last year, the country's largest export, amid bitter international opposition to the unilateral US sanctions.⁵⁵

Sanctions and poor-economic conditions in Iran can persuade Iran to look at other global powers in order to balance United States. Tehran's growing economic ties with Beijing, strengthening Moscow-Tehran axis and Chinese view of Iran as a linchpin of regional economic One Belt One Road strategy (OBOR). Moreover, China also have seat in United Nations Security council in case of countering United States against Islamic Republic of Iran.

5 Conclusion

The confrontational relations of United States and Iran were coming on the right track of cooperation. These bilateral relations, if not the best or far away from better but were still good enough to carry out future talks and negotiations or agreement between both countries. Before, Obama, not a single leader of United States after the 1979 revolution tried to have smooth relations with Iran. At the same time, we have seen hardliners on Iranian side as well. There was the golden opportunity for both countries in face of the moderate leadership; Obama and Rouhani to have a step forward. Fortunately, this golden opportunity was utilized by both sides; despite the fact they had consumed a lot of time in way of coming to JCPOA.

The cancelled deal and then sanctions on Iran have created troubles for Irani people and the government. The economic sanctions deprived Iran of the benefits of international trade, energy security and sustainable development. The inability of a fragile state to keep the masses happy is creating a distance between the state and society. Iran was following the nuclear deal and it was confirmed by neutral sources like IAEA. And despite the fact that Trump announced his withdrawal from the deal, Iran announced to stay with deal and this thing has shown Iranian commitments and United States commitments as well. It shows that United States is no more a reliable source to have negotiations with as it cannot keep her words even in multilateral deal.

⁵²Amy Mackinnon, At Helsinki Summit, Putin Likely to Rebuff Any Pressure From Trump on Syria, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/05/helsinki-summit-putin-rebuff-pressure-from-trump-syria-russia-us-iran/>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴Simon Miles, Farzan Sabet, What Would Reagan Do on Iran, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/30/what-would-reagan-do-on-iran-victory-cold-war-gorbachev-soviet-union-iran-maximum-pressure/>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

⁵⁵ Dawn News, US vows 'relentless' sanctions as Iran pledges to stand up to 'bullying' by Washington, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1443766>. Retrieved on 6th January 2019.

Trump has a strange behavior towards Iran is because of the hawks which are around him are mostly anti Iran and obviously pro-Israel. Trump also had good relations with Israel and the other major allies of United States of America like that of Saudi Arabia.

Trump has cancelled the deal because it was in favor of Iran, so, now he had to pay great attention to this topic. If in any case Trump will not be able to take such decisions, the vacuum will be filled by the other nations, specially rising powers like China and that thing would be again a cold war like situation in America.

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