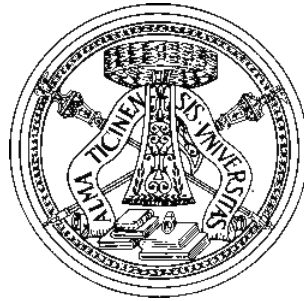


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TITOLO TESI

The US and Iran: An Analytically Eclectic Research on Economic Sanctions.

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Introduction:

In 2018 the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump withdrew unilaterally from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a multilateral international agreement that was meant to build confidence measures between Iran and the so-called P5+1 countries (US, UK, Russia, China, France, and Germany), with the goal to monitor and ensure that nuclear developments in Iran were advanced strictly for peaceful intentions. The deal came to life in 2015 after extensive negotiations and diplomatic efforts between the parties involved. According to the monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency as of 5 March 2018 Iran “was implementing its nuclear-related commitments.”¹ Nevertheless, the Trump-Pompeo administration pursued a foreign policy that, from the campaign period, unapologetically claimed that the deal was unfavorable for U.S. interests as it boosted Iranian malign activities in the area., Trump declared during an interview that the Iranians “are very good negotiators, [...] they are laughing at us back in Iran”². The administration designed a new sanction regime for Iran which reimposed former economic sanctions, adopting a policy dubbed “Maximum Pressure.”³

If the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was enforced, and the monitoring systems such as the IAEA were registering cooperation and respect for the deal, how came the decision of the U.S. to withdraw from the deal so strongly pushed by the administration? This is one of the many questions that arises when certain events in the broader realm of diplomatic endeavors and foreign policy decisions are examined.

In November 2021 the talks between Iran and the P5+1 countries (Germany, France, the UK, China, Russia, and the United States) resumed after a long stalemate in the negotiations. The talks were meant to negotiate a possible revival of the JCPOA or the creation of a new agreement that could tackle concerns about nuclear development in Iran. After a seemingly positive start to negotiations, the parties arrived once more at a deadlock and since then, it appeared that no new steps were taken to continue engagement. The conditions that permitted the parties to try to revive the negotiations changed also after Iran’s position regarding the war in Ukraine and its cooperation with Russia⁴. Moreover, widespread protests in September 2022 forced the government to tackle internal instability as segments of the population rebelled against systemic police brutality and misogyny⁵.

Almost six years have passed since the U.S. withdrew from the deal and reimposed economic sanctions on Iran, and yet at the time of writing, a positive end to the policy seems unlikely. This piece of work will use eclectic analysis, integrating, research on negotiation, economic techniques of statecraft (economic sanctions), and discourse analysis to examine how rhetoric, ideologies and perceptions of elites, can be linked with the function and development of economic statecraft. This work is intended to be a pilot study and an initial multidisciplinary exploration for further research.

The interest in advancing this kind of research stems from recent discussions of economic techniques of statecraft, especially economic sanctions, and the controversial issue as to the degree to which they are effective at reaching a desired influence outcome in the international arena. Some argue that they are ineffective and counterproductive, however others argue that they are a useful influence tool. Past efforts in research on the topic excluded different factors from the analysis and tried to provide explanations of a phenomenon by analyzing the subject “in a vacuum”. It is unwise to exclude or include *a priori* such techniques of statecraft without analyzing them in tandem with diplomatic and propaganda techniques to better understand the broader context in which they are used.

In the wake of a renewed possibility of nuclear escalation and military confrontation due to the crisis that led to the war in Ukraine, it is crucial to better understand how negotiations, mediation, propaganda, and techniques of statecraft influence actors in the international realm, and how these may lead - or not - to conflict resolution, and de-escalation. This case effectively demonstrates how far we are from grappling with the nature of the international realm, as there are intrinsic difficulties in linking together the role of influence, perceptions, techniques of statecraft, and negotiations as means to settle and manage conflicts.

In the aftermath of WWII, states convened in San Francisco and acknowledged that war was the least preferred option for resolving disputes between states. This principle was enshrined in the charter of the United Nations ⁶, but military techniques of statecraft and the pursuit of war are still important options for policymakers today. War is painful, costly and leads to societal trauma that may hinder conflict resolution for the parties involved. For this reason, a preferred policy choice to resolve conflicts without resorting to violent means is the use of economic techniques of statecraft generally referred to in discourses as “economic sanctions”. These kinds of techniques of statecraft have been used since antiquity and have maintained their appeal to these days. Starting in 1990 the United States and the

United Nations imposed, refined, and consolidated various sanction regimes promoting this technique as a “non-violent” means to influence another state or non-governmental actor to comply with their demands advanced by the sender. The advancement of these kinds of economic techniques prompted large interest from scholars and practitioners who asked how influential and beneficial these instruments are.

Much of the current academic debate focuses on analyzing the role of economic sanctions in influence. Some scholars asserted that economic sanctions “do not work”/”do work” and wanted to demonstrate why these techniques of statecraft do not work/work as an instrument of influence. These efforts, nevertheless, are fruitless given that a general theory of economic sanctions seems elusive. Policy makers still have no clear answer to the degree to which such techniques are effective and when and how to use them.

It seems that in research on economic sanctions, authors have tried to stick with a rule of parsimony to develop facets of a general theory that nevertheless works only in such kinds of mental experiments where certain factors are inserted in the analysis and others are ignored. But policymakers do not operate in a simple world where all other factors are kept *ceteris paribus*. For this reason, in this piece of work, the initial position will be to avoid the pursuit of testing and developing a “general theory” and to unveil “a causal mechanism”. Causal Mechanism is defined as a process in which an identified variable is analyzed to outline the influence it has on the outcome.⁷ This research instead will focus on integrating theories present in the literature from different disciplines and underline the idea that there are *various* causal mechanisms that may lead – or not - to a specific event. In this case the outcome(s) that arise(d) from the imposition of economic sanctions in the U.S-Iran Nuclear Deal case-study. The present study then can be expanded to integrate different case studies to obtain a more general analysis. The chaotic nature of reality is willingly acknowledged in this piece of work, and there is no pretense to claim that this mode of conduct will lead to a robust, predictable, and general analysis. It is an initial effort to expand the scope of analysis, and in the hope that in future there will be the possibility to further develop such a framework.

The approach adopted here is analytical eclecticism, and this position will be presented and justified subsequently, framing the state of the research and how this piece of work positions itself therewithin. Then the focus will be put on integrating what we know about economic techniques of statecraft, with

the literature on negotiation, conflict, and discourse analysis. To do so, the greatest and most relevant influences on the research have been William Zartman, David Baldwin, Robert Jervis, Daniel Drezner, Rudra Sil, Peter Katzenstein, Ruth Wodak, and Theun Van Dijk.

The guiding research question of the work is:

To what extent did the adoption and the framing of various degrees of economic sanctions affected negotiations and relations between the U.S. and Iran in the years 2012-2018?

By integrating different causal mechanisms, concepts, and theories identified by previous authors of different fields of research and paradigms I hope to advance the current state of knowledge about economic sanctions and how they affected relations between Iran and the U.S, to move beyond typical studies on the subject that focused on attempts to exercise power through economic techniques of statecraft in isolation from the complexities and nuances of specific cases. It is an attempt to move beyond the “sanctions work” and “sanctions do not work” debates that treated such topics in isolation from themes of perception, negotiations, conflict dynamics, and discourses produced.

The thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, I will present a literature review that will attempt to identify and discuss the relevant concepts, theories, and ideas developed around the subjects of Economic Techniques of Statecraft (Economic sanctions), Social-Psychology/Critical Discourse Analysis and Negotiation studies. Starting from these ideas, concepts, and theories, I aim to bring together these separate islands of knowledge and integrate them. Then, I will move on to elaborate my research design and the method of analysis that will be used to study the case of interest. From there, I will provide some historical background between the U.S. and Iran looking at the processes and the interactions that led to the successful outcome of 2015 first, and successively to the processes that led to the reimposition of economic sanctions and the current deadlock in negotiations by analyzing the discourses produced by relevant actors (speeches, presidential statements, various texts).

Chapter 1

Analytically Eclectic Theoretical Framework:

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Theoretical Framework: What is Analytical Eclecticism?

Although some may object to the claim that an eclectic study is at risk of being a mix of incompatible and incommensurable views, I support Rudra and Katzenstein's view that pursuing an eclectic analysis does not mean that "everything matters" and that a numerous set of causal mechanisms will be presented. Instead, the goal is to integrate parsimonious paradigm-based research by understanding how these different causal mechanisms interplay with each other.⁸ This is not to say that we should dismiss previous research, it is instead an effort to look at how authors from various positions, studied the arguments of interest and how we can reconcile the bits of relevant knowledge that have been analyzed and presented. This work then is entering a discussion not only on the subjects of negotiation, influence, and economic sanctions, but it is entering the wider topic of what is the state of research in social sciences and what could we do to avoid falling into pre-made and rigid boxes of thought that may lead students, scholars, and practitioners to hang tight to paradigms that may obfuscate and distort our ability to understand reality.

Analytical eclecticism is not meant to be an alternative to traditional research models, but it is "an intellectual stance that supports efforts to complement, engage, and utilize theoretical constructs embedded in contending research traditions to build complex arguments that bear on substantive problems of interest to both scholars and practitioners."⁹ The framework of analytic eclecticism is based on a pragmatic ethos, and on an interest in addressing issues that are wider in contrast to the narrow "traditional" research that aims to test theories. It is committed to incorporate the "messiness and complexity" of "real-world" situations.¹⁰ Moreover the approach emphasizes the importance of capturing different types of causal mechanisms that oftentimes are analyzed separately within a particular research tradition.

Daniel Drezner, a leading scholar in economic sanctions research, adopted and advocated an eclectic approach when studying sanctions and non-proliferation.¹¹ The author in past research was engaged in

theory testing and theory development, and an endeavor in analytical eclecticism from his side represents a probable dissatisfaction with the state of research on economic sanctions and supports the need to adopt such an approach in a field that is characterized by an anxiety to develop a “theory of sanctions” that oftentimes leads to sloppy, rigid and synthetic conclusions. As Drezner advises “an approach grounded in analytical eclecticism would help sanctions scholars avoid the dangerous charge of policy naivety.”¹² Incorporating and complementing conceptual and theoretical elements of multiple traditions has benefits and limitations. Nevertheless, the limitations and risks that may derive from an eclectic approach are “acceptable in light of the potential gains.”¹³

Robert Pape and David Baldwin are two scholars from the U.S that produced competing and influential strands of research in the Economic sanctions’ literature. Research linked to authors such as Robert Pape produced certain paradigm-like knowledge that concluded that economic sanctions do not work. This is exemplified by the title of an academic article published in 1997 by Robert Pape, “Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work.”¹⁴ Pape developed his arguments that economic sanctions do not work by looking at and re-evaluating the Hufbauer et al. research, which is a large-N historical database. Baldwin, in contrast, argued that this type of statecraft is more “effective” than what is commonly presented in the research. Both these authors present arguments, reasonings, and possible causal mechanisms that can be reconciled together in an eclectic fashion. The distinctiveness of the eclectic approach is rooted in its effort to promote research that acknowledges the relevance of incorporating elements of different causal stories formulated by competing research traditions. It is important to operate with care when translating and understanding the concepts, terms, and indicators produced by these past efforts in research.¹⁵

As presented by Rudra and Katzenstein, Tetlock emphasized the importance of blending arguments from different research traditions and “improvising ad hoc solutions in a rapidly changing world rather than becoming anchored down by theory-laden abstractions”¹⁶ The approach suits the present research as it is “neither aspiring to uncover universal laws, nor content with statistical associations or interpretations of specific phenomena”. Rudra and Katzenstein argue that analytical eclecticism is operating in line with what Merton called “middle range” theories, designed “to be portable within a bounded set of comparable contexts where certain cause-effects links recur” and “recognize the conditions under which some of these links become more causally significant while others do not.”¹⁷

Conceptualization

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The current section is dedicated to clarifying what is meant in this work by economic sanctions. At first, the conceptual task will be pursued, and once the concept is defined and justified, the operationalization of the concept into some forms of indicators and detectors will be addressed.¹⁸

Certain scholars that studied economic sanctions argued that the term has been stretched so that it now has a variety of meanings.¹⁹ In pursuing a careful and advantageous conceptualization Toshkov warns: “Apply too rigid and strict definitions, and empirical relevance will be lost. Allow too loose and compromising definitions, and the analytical clarity will be gone.”²⁰ Baldwin reports that the lack of conceptual clarity is one of the core deficiencies of the sanctions literature that produced conclusions about a topic that appears to be addressed too loosely and vaguely to start with.

For instance, as Baldwin notes, when scholars approach this topic, they “ask different questions, use different concepts, and set the discussion in different analytical contexts”.²¹ It is important to note that theory development is dependent on thorough concept definition and analysis, therefore if conceptualization is done in a superficial way, possible developments will be affected by it.²² Moreover, the analysis of economic sanctions is usually conducted without taking into consideration that this technique is one possible action of many that policymakers have in a determined situation.

Techniques of Statecraft in Context

To start the analysis of economic sanctions it is important to take into consideration the broader category of economic techniques of statecraft. Statecraft is defined by Baldwin as “the art of conducting state affairs” and as “the governmental influence attempts directed at other actors in the international system”.²³ Baldwin stresses that the study of economic statecraft in a “vacuum” does not bring any value to the discussion, as they must be analyzed by taking in consideration the alternatives as well.²⁴ In response to this deficit, Baldwin elaborated a taxonomy of techniques of statecraft following Harold Laswell’s *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*.

The taxonomy is elaborated as such:

1. *Propaganda* is defined as “influence attempts relying primarily on the deliberate manipulation of verbal symptoms”.
2. *Diplomacy* is defined as “influence attempts relying primarily on negotiation.”
3. *Economic Statecraft* is defined as “influence attempts relying primarily on resources which have a reasonable semblance of a market price in terms of money.”
4. *Military Statecraft* is defined as “influence attempts relying primarily on violence, weapons, or force.”²⁵

The author suggests that states adopt different degrees of each of these techniques when exerting a particular influence attempt.²⁶ The use of economic statecraft is oftentimes more costly than propaganda or diplomacy, and less costly than the use of military statecraft.²⁷ Economic statecraft in this definition implies that there are different sub-techniques that policymakers can use. This analytical framework provided by Baldwin goes to fill some important gaps that are still present in the study of economic techniques of statecraft. In his book, he proceeds to analyze how scholars addressed this topic and underlines the analytical shortcomings of past studies. The author suggests then that the term economic sanctions have three common meanings. The first one is a “narrow concept referring to the use of economic measures to enforce international law.” The second refers to “types of values that are intended to be reduced or augmented in the target state.” The third one, “corresponds to the concept of economic techniques of statecraft.”²⁸ Moreover, the term Economic Sanctions is used in so many ways that it has become a “stretched concept”. But the term economic sanctions is, nevertheless, still highly relevant in the literature and as Baldwin notes it is not possible to ignore it.²⁹ Starting from the analysis of Baldwin there is room to further analyze the economic techniques of statecraft to bring more clarity.

Two criteria are important for the development of a concept, and they are based on whether the concept will 1. “Help with the identification and evaluation of policy options” and 2. whether “it avoids unnecessary departures from common usage”.

Therefore, to clarify the concept of economic statecraft, Baldwin stresses that there are three basic components: **Type, Domain and Scope**.

1. **Type** of policy instrument used in the influence attempt, i.e., economic.
2. **Domain** of the influence attempt, i.e., another international actor(s)

*3. **Scope** of the influence attempt, i.e., some dimension(s) of the target(s) behavior (including beliefs, attitudes, opinions, expectations, emotions, and/or propensities to act). ”³⁰*

To see how the conceptualization adopted in this work is relevant and useful we can compare it with one of the broadest attempts to research and analyze economic sanctions comparatively as done by Hufbauer et al. They defined economic sanctions as “the deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations”.³¹ The work of Hufbauer et al. concentrates on four main questions that are concerned with the investigation of the record of economic sanctions and their impact on achieving foreign policy goals; the factors – political and economic - that may lead to the improvement of sanctions on having a positive contribution to the policy; the costs of sanctions to sender and target; and the lessons that can be learned from these economic sanctions regimes for future informed policymaking.

A shortcoming that can be found in the work of Hufbauer et al. may be the lack of a framework to think about economic statecraft in contingency with other techniques that are adopted when pursuing an influence attempt, for instance, propaganda (media, communication etc..). Moreover, there is a lack of a framework to look at economic statecraft by type, domain, and scope; and the nuances/history of the relationship between sender and target are generally ignored. It is a quantitative rather than a qualitative research effort. On the other hand, Hufbauer et al.’s arguments are illuminating as they introduce in their analysis the importance of time and the duration of economic sanctions. Introducing time in the analysis may help us to understand how economic sanctions worked and evolved - or not - in a specific case study. In this present study, time, propaganda, and forms of communication will be integrated in the analysis, and in a subsequent section, I will provide an explanation on how this analysis will be done.

Economic Sanctions can be also understood as a kind of Negative Inducement (Stick), and their usage requires the possibility of Positive Inducements (Carrots) as well, as a bargaining instrument.³² As defined by Solingen, positive inducements are “benefits or rewards extended to leaders, ruling coalitions, or broader constituencies in target states, with the expectation that they will persuade recipients”.³³ So, in this definition the role and the importance of diplomacy and negotiation is well integrated in how economic sanctions work and evolve. Another different definition comes from Kessler that defined “sanctions” as an “umbrella term” that is used to refer to situations taken by a government, “to prevent

other states and/or persons from engaging in trade, buying weapons, accessing foreign-held funds, and/or traveling to other countries.”³⁴ This definition leaves outside of the picture the scope of the influence attempt.

The United Nations Security Council uses the term “sanctions” encompassing “comprehensive economic and trade sanctions to more targeted measures such as arms embargoes, travel bans, and financial or commodity restrictions.”³⁵ In this work, Economic sanctions are intended as a technique of statecraft meant to impede the access to global financial, economic markets and/or to limit freedom of movement imposed by a sender as a tool to influence a target’s behavior to achieve a specific policy outcome. Nevertheless, this definition appears to be limiting, therefore more conceptual clarity is needed.

For this reason, I am interested in providing a basic three-level classification of economic sanctions by considering different degrees of intensity of sanctions as a foreign policy tool. Categorizing economic sanctions in this fashion may help us analyze the influence exerted by the sender state on the target. Understanding the degree of economic sanctions may clarify how these mechanisms are used to pursue foreign policy goals. Moreover, following Baldwin’s guidelines, the categorization elaborated in this work aims to overcome the simplicity of understanding economic sanction regimes in a dichotomic way (presence/absence). In the following part of this chapter different economic techniques of statecraft will be presented.

The Evolution of Economic Sanctions: towards more clarity

Economic sanctions, as Hakimdavar argues, can be divided firstly by looking at the distinction between *unilateral and multilateral* sanctions regimes.³⁶ Economic sanctions regimes are referred to as unilateral when they are imposed by a single sender. Multilateral sanctions are sanction regimes that are imposed by a collective of states and/or institutions. These multilateral sanctions can be enforced at the UN level or by a common decision by a group of countries. The following figure is intended to provide a classification of different sanction regimes.

Figure 1.1 from Hakimdavar, G. 2014. A strategic understanding of UN economic sanctions. P. 23

As we can see in the figure there are various classes of sanctions. A third class of economic sanctions is the so-called Smart Sanctions. Smart sanctions were developed in the early 2000s after the widespread scandals that derived from the comprehensive sanction regimes adopted by the UN and the US alike in the 1990s. Sanction regimes, therefore, are constantly changing. Throughout the years many committees and panels of experts emerged to guide and help policymakers in the decision-making and monitoring processes. This process can be referred to as the “individualization of sanctions” process – intended to make sanction regimes less impactful on the civilians of the target state.³⁷

Then, economic sanctions can be divided into primary and secondary sanctions. Primary sanctions affect citizens and/or companies operating under the jurisdiction of the sender. Secondary sanctions are meant to influence and halt activities between a third party and the target of the sanction regime under the threat to exclude or sanction the third party that is not complying with the sender.³⁸ Secondary sanctions are becoming more often part of the strategy of the United States thanks to its large control over banking and financial institutions.

Interestingly the term “sanctions” is not present in the UN Charter, and as is noted by Carish, Article 39 of the Charter gives authority to the Security Council to locate threats to international peace and security; Article 40 calls on all the parties to abide by the decisions of the Security Council; Article 41 describes the actions and the measures that should be enforced against a member that is not complying with the Security Council in order to restore peace, and lastly, Article 42 allows a military blockade.³⁹

During the years of the cold war, economic sanctions were not used significantly, and Economic Sanctions as a type of statecraft started to be used more frequently after the collapse of the USSR in the ‘90s.⁴⁰ Over thirteen sanctions regimes were imposed throughout the ‘90s, and many authors refer to that period as the sanction decade.⁴¹ The most famous case of sanctions regime enforced in this decade, was the comprehensive sanctions imposed against Iraq in response to the invasion of Kuwait.

During this decade the United Nations Security Council started to adopt so-called “humanitarian sanctions” more often in response to alleged humanitarian crises. This was possible because the United States in the post-Cold War period had greater leverage and power in the UN and had the possibility to

push forward its agenda. The U.S. relied on the instrument of primary and secondary sanctions in various instances. Moreover, the US is the actor that used sanctions more prominently as a foreign policy tool. Hakimdavar informs us that in the period 1945-2014, the US imposed more than one hundred sanctions, while the UK imposed seven, France seven, China three, and USSR/Russia twelve.⁴²

Multilateral action

A seminal work on the study of multilateral economic sanctions was that of Johan Galtung, who tried to understand the processes of economic sanctions that were in place against the colonial state referred to as 'Rhodesia' (present day Zimbabwe) in 1966. This was the first case where the UN adopted this type of statecraft to coerce a state-like entity into abandoning policies deemed non coherent with human rights standards as delineated by the international community.⁴³ In this ground-breaking empirical work, Galtung defined economic sanctions as 'actions initiated by one or more international actors (the "senders") against one or more others (the "receivers") with either or both of two purposes: to *punish* the receivers by depriving them of some value and/or to make the receivers comply with certain norms the senders deem important."⁴⁴

Galtung in his analysis of the case of 'Rhodesia' stresses that it is important to understand what purpose(s) are central for policymakers. Galtung asks *what would have happened if* a policy of reward for compliance (positive inducements) was in force instead of sanctioning 'Rhodesia'. He argues that if economic sanctions are used in a punishment-oriented fashion when they are failing to obtain compliance, there will be a form of psychological "gratification that derives from knowing or believing that the sinner gets his due, that the criminal has been punished".⁴⁵

This work was/is highly influential and has inspired many others to pursue research in this field of study. Galtung clarified that the study was intended to be a pilot study since the sanction regime at the time of the study was still in action, and therefore providing a solid conclusion was not possible. Nevertheless, he tried to delineate one possible causal mechanism that could help us understand whether a particular technique is useful to pursue a certain policy goal.

Theory building then became a goal and obsession for many researchers in this field and the main research question(s) became centered on whether economic sanctions were “successful” or not. Baldwin, nevertheless, tried to break from this “tradition” and build on some of the arguments based on the work of Johan Galtung, who emphasized that rather than a single theory on sanctions, there are *various* causal mechanisms that could lead to less or more effective sanctions, and that there are various causal logics that can lead to differing theories of economic sanctions.⁴⁶

Operationalization of Economic Sanctions

In the pursuit to achieve more clarity, the catch-all word economic sanctions will be broken down into different ordinal categories. Certain scholars in their quest to study countries that were targeted by economic sanctions tried to categorize them in a dichotomic fashion. Kamali, Mashayekh, and Jandaghi focused on economic sanctions' severity and/or duration.⁴⁷ They categorized the countries that are affected by economic sanctions by dividing them into two categories: *comprehensive sanctions and limited sanctions*. The author does not think that the reductive dichotomy of presence/absence and or comprehensive/limited alone in studying economic sanctions is fully helpful in producing relevant knowledge on the topic. Therefore, in this work, it is proposed that alongside the presence/absence of economic sanctions, the framing and the discourses that revolve around economic sanctions will be analyzed as well, as indicators that may influence their effectiveness as a tool:

This attempt aims to shed light on other factors and nuances that oftentimes in the literature are ignored as the focus is frequently centered on whether a sanction regime is in force or not.

Another point that is important to stress is, as Art argues, that “A given instrument can carry a state part of the way to a given goal, even though it cannot carry the state all the way there.”⁴⁸ Therefore, in this work a conscious effort will be pursued to avoid referring to the outcome of economic sanctions as success/failure. Levy refers to the phenomenon of attributing a binary form to effects that may vary by degree as the “fallacy of misplaced dichotomies”. This applies as well to the “failure/success” debates about economic sanctions. The debates in the literature on economic sanctions are broad, nevertheless, the discussion still lacks clarity. I am not satisfied by looking only at the presence or absence of economic sanctions and determining whether they are solely responsible for the “success or failure” of a specific

influence attempt or for the outcomes. The importance of looking at the process and the historicity of these instruments is paramount.

Diplomacy, Negotiation and Conflict:

Hence, it feels necessary to bring into the picture notions from Diplomacy, Negotiation, and Conflict studies. In this section of the dissertation, I will try to provide some notions, concepts, and relevant theories about diplomacy, negotiation, and conflict. Firstly, some general knowledge about the subject will be presented. Then the discussion will narrow down, and an in-depth presentation of the works of William Zartman and the theoretical constructs will be offered. Zartman proposes valuable analytical and conceptual frameworks that are apt to be reconciled and integrated with our eclectic *modus operandi*.

In a relevant discussion of the relationship and links between the fields of diplomacy and international relations, Constantinou presents different ways in which scholars and practitioners presented the subject. Some treated diplomacy and international relations as two terms that may refer to the same thing. Others used the terms diplomacy and foreign policy and used them as synonyms. Moreover, in the international relations literature diplomacy is presented as one instrument or technique that is available to conduct foreign policy.⁴⁹ Morgenthau, a prominent scholar of international relations in the 20th century, viewed good diplomacy as the “most realistically achievable way of escaping the fate to which the national interests of states were otherwise propelling humankind – death in the nuclear age.”⁵⁰ Other scholars who adopted a critical standpoint when studying diplomacy argued that diplomacy is not merely a profession, but it is an endeavor that permeates our lives.

Therefore, it is understood that it is not strictly a profession for trained individuals, but it is also “an everyday vocation and mode of living.”⁵¹ Some scholars and researchers focused their concentration on studying “conventional anomalies” such as non-state actors and their “well-established diplomatic standing” arguing that the diplomatic system is more open than what is usually thought of.⁵² The relevance of these analyses is supported as we are observing in recent history various instances where states opened talks and negotiations with terrorist organizations of various capacities - for a recent example, see the US – Taliban Peace Accords.⁵³ The discourse, therefore, is open, and the understanding of diplomacy is compartmentalized and fragmented.⁵⁴

Zartman, a prominent scholar in negotiation and conflict studies, provides definitions and critiques in his analysis on approaches and theoretical frameworks in negotiation studies. His discussion at first is centered especially on two terms that are so commonly used: diplomacy and negotiations. These terms were used as synonyms in the past, but Zartman stressed the fact that they have substantive differences. Berridge presents this notion too, fixing the year 1796 as the defining moment and a critical juncture when negotiation and diplomacy started to be thought of as two separate endeavors, or negotiation being a subset of diplomacy in some way. In this regard, Berridge notes that negotiation is *only one of the functions of diplomacy*, but arguably one of the most important.⁵⁵

Negotiation is one of the most important ways we have to arrive at collective decision-making. It is understood that negotiation and diplomacy are modes of conducting affairs and forms of decision-making that span across time and human societies. Most of our knowledge in the mainstream academic literature on these issues comes from a Western, euro-centric perspective, as diplomacy as we know it today in its formalized form, developed and crystallized in Italian cities and expanded then to the rest of Europe. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Richelieu was one prominent and influential scholar and practitioner on diplomacy and negotiation. He underlined the importance of keeping channels of communication open between two states even when relations are tense such as in periods of war. This notion of “continuous negotiation” as it is conceptualized by the author, is fundamental so that when conditions permit it, we can have compromise and settlement.⁵⁶

Diplomacy and negotiations have been usually seen by scholars and practitioners alike as endeavors that involve and require a certain degree of deception and coercion. Nevertheless, there were certain authors, such as De Callières that, contrary to general assumptions, emphasized the importance of maintaining honesty and open communication in negotiations as it may lead to positive long-term relations. Instead, deception in negotiation is described as a way characteristic of entities or states that are concerned with short-term gains and/or empire-building.⁵⁷ More recently, Constantinou argued that negotiation has been the “key focus of the diplomatic craft.”⁵⁸ Diplomacy is defined as the “pursuit of national policy goals through international communication.”⁵⁹

The study of diplomacy, Zartman stresses, is a prescriptive study, meaning that authors tried to produce suggestions for practitioners to adjust their behaviors and successfully conduct their jobs. There are two

main ways in which diplomacy was and is currently studied. On one hand, certain scholars focused their analysis on behavioral principles, while on the other hand, some scholars focused their analysis on the assumption that power principles are the relevant factor to look at and they produced relevant knowledge by observing and centering their focus on notions of success and/or failure.⁶⁰ Yet, while Zartman acknowledges the relevance of these works, he goes on to critique them for the basic assumptions that underlie their analytical pursuit. Nevertheless, he points out that these approaches share more than what may appear at first. He advises to free them from certain deterministic assumptions and integrate these approaches together, mentioning that at the time of his writing there was not a great amount of cross-referencing and borrowing from other approaches.

For instance, one criticism is directed to the assumption that power is the guiding force, and that by putting excessive importance on the outcome itself and notions of success and/or failure without keeping much track of the process we lose precious information. He contends that studying diplomacy by these notions leads to useful lessons for diplomats, but little knowledge can be produced on how outcomes in negotiation processes are attained. Studying negotiations and diplomacy based solely on notions of success and/or failure is “as insightful as analyzing coalition or legislative behavior on the basis of bills passed.”⁶¹ Therefore, studying the process and not only outcomes, is suggested to be important to produce relevant knowledge. This insight may be relevant for this work as the same line of reasoning may be adopted in line with the present study on economic techniques of statecraft as well.

How can we analyze negotiations?

From here the discussion unfolds and the core of Zartman’s argument on what is negotiation analysis is presented. Negotiation is defined as “the process of combining divergent viewpoints to produce a common agreement.”⁶² *How* then are divergent viewpoints combined to produce a common agreement?

From the analysis of Zartman we can identify two different strategies and modes of conduct that negotiators adopt in their effort. One strategy for negotiations emphasizes the way in which negotiators identify the range of alternative positions available to themselves and the other party. The focus is put on the process of narrowing down these options until a single, mutually acceptable outcome emerges.

For instance, negotiators can **use their power and influence** to make certain alternative positions less attractive or even impossible. This can be done through threats, warnings, or promises that express the consequences of certain choices. Negotiators can also **use commitments and obligations** made by themselves or by others to limit the range of acceptable alternatives. These commitments can create a sense of inevitability or irreversibility that can put pressure on the other party to concede. Then there is the creation of ***fait accomplis***. *Fait accomplis* are actions or events that are irreversible, making them difficult for the other party to challenge. Negotiations can create *fait accomplis* by taking unilateral actions or by relying on external events to shape the negotiation landscape.⁶³

Moreover, negotiators can use promises and predictions to try and paint a positive picture of the future if an agreement is reached, or a negative picture of the future if an agreement is not reached. These **framing techniques** can influence the other party's perceptions of the relative attractiveness of different options. Lastly, negotiators can also **limit alternatives** by demonstrating that certain options are not feasible or achievable. This can be done by highlighting resource constraints, technical limitations, or political obstacles.⁶⁴

The second approach focuses on how the parties' initial positions move closer together until they reach a mutually satisfying agreement. This approach emphasizes the tactical maneuvering, concessions, and compromises that lead to a narrowing of differences. Negotiators need to carefully consider the areas of agreement and disagreement between the parties, as this helps them focus their efforts on narrowing the gaps and finding common ground. Negotiators may need to make explicit concessions or compromises to reach an agreement. Negotiators may use procedural means, such as sequencing or side payments, to resolve differences without requiring direct concessions. This can help maintain the appearance of fairness and avoid the perception of one party gaining an unfair advantage. Negotiators may need to reframe issues or create mutual understanding to bridge the gap between their initial positions. This may involve finding creative solutions that address the underlying interests of both parties, rather than simply trading concessions. In some cases, intermediaries or third parties can facilitate the negotiation process. These individuals can provide neutral ground for discussion, help break deadlocks, or offer their expertise and insights.⁶⁵

These two approaches to negotiation provide complementary perspectives on the dynamics of negotiation. The first approach emphasizes the strategic management of options and the use of power to

shape the negotiating environment. The second approach focuses on the process of finding common ground, making concessions, and reaching a mutually acceptable agreement. Zartman's analysis highlights the importance of both approaches in analyzing negotiations.

This leads the reasoning to the central tension between cooperation and conflict in the dynamic, as negotiators are urged to increase cooperation and common interests while seeking to maximize their own interests and overcome hostile and violent conflict.⁶⁶ For these reasons, negotiation as the author stresses, is a matter of bridging and bringing together different perspectives. Therefore, the reality of negotiations is more complex than that which is analyzed by different types of rationalist models that focus their attention on concessions and other changes in offering points “in a vacuum.”⁶⁷ It is reported by Zartman’s analysis of negotiations, that even in examples of negotiations that involved were discussing numerically quantifiable variables, the numerical analysis was not fully apt to showcase the dynamics, the movements and the outcomes.⁶⁸

Chapter 2

Ideologies in conflict: The Socio-Psychological View and Critical Discourse Analysis

This study will emphasize the importance of the communication of presidents and other relevant actors that were influential during the years of the negotiation, implementation, and withdrawal of the JCPOA 2012-2018. To do so, the study will present certain concepts from political psychology, as it is an important strand of research that contributed to the expansion and evolution of international relations, negotiations, and diplomatic studies. When authors like Robert Jervis started to integrate psychological factors into classical international relations theories, it became clear this field of study ignored important factors in its analysis. Jervis focused on the study of perceptions and misperceptions in international relations, trying to integrate these new psychological factors into the mainstream analysis of the time. He argued that “most international relations scholars had ignored the general question of how states perceived each other, and despite a concentration on issues of national security, had paid little attention to the more specific topic of when and why threats are perceived.”⁶⁹ The author argues that this is crucial to analysis, as forming an accurate perception of other actors in the international arena is very difficult since the other’s behavior is “usually ambiguous and deception is an ever-present possibility.”⁷⁰

International relations, diplomacy, and agreements are made by people, and leaving outside of the picture these important psychological mechanisms that may lead these key figures to produce perceptions, behaviors, and policies seems ill-suited for the understanding and study of international relations and diplomacy.

In 2018 an annual review published by Harvard University addressed the topic of Political Psychology in International Relations, and the authors argued that many theories of international politics are linked with many psychological micro-foundations. Paradigms such as realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism can be expanded by integrating psychological variables in these paradigms, as suggested by scholars such as Goldgeier & Tetlock. Political Psychology is linked with a growing work based on the psychological micro-foundation of successful diplomacy.⁷¹ The field appears to be more focused on

issues of conflict rather than on cooperation and privileges a focus on behavior rather than institutions.⁷² As international relations and political psychology evolved there was a trend to move beyond these paradigms into a more eclectic *modus operandi* as the central framework for analysis.⁷³ Political psychology according to Huddy, Sears, and Levy is “at the most general level an application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics”.⁷⁴ This field of study is interested in analyzing a variety of issues that span across various disciplines. Some scholars studied the personalities of heads of state and others studied the effects of perception and biases on decision-makers.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, it should be noted that analyzing these factors is a difficult task, especially if we are studying them from a distance, and from secondary sources. In this regard, there are several strategies that we can adopt to grasp the psychological components from accessible sources. It is important to analyze domestic ideologies as they influence views of world politics.⁷⁶

The framework will be built on Fisher, Kelman, and Nan’s approach to conflict analysis and resolution, rooted in a socio-psychological view of classical schools of thought and approaches to international relations.⁷⁷ These authors advanced four propositions about the nature of international conflict. For clarity’s sake, these propositions are discussed in a separate paragraph below. These propositions, as we will see, have many commonalities with the approaches to study negotiations that were outlined in the previous chapter, and the way in which they are relevant to take into consideration alongside the Critical Discourse Analysis Approach.

The socio-psychological framework:

Their first proposition is that “*International conflict is a process driven by collective needs and fears, rather than entirely a product of rational calculation of objective national interests on the part of political decision-makers*”.⁷⁸ Therefore, it is suggested that looking solely at conflict as a product of decision-makers is not fully appropriate. One should look at and integrate other factors. For instance, one could analyze discourses produced by the Republican party at the time the deal was signed by looking at declarations and protests made by Republican congressmen – for instance in 2015 Congressman Tom Cotton and 47 other senators signed a letter to the leaders of Iran claiming that the deal could be scrapped by the next president.⁷⁹ Another interesting case is the 2015 speech of the Prime Minister of Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu at a joint session of Congress in which he talked about the Iranian nuclear deal and made it clear that it was in no way welcomed by his administration.⁸⁰ Netanyahu was invited by John Boehner, a Republican congressman. The security of the state of Israel has relevance in U.S. political debates. The two countries are close allies, and close links are present also at a societal level.⁸¹

This leads us to the second proposition: “International *conflict is an intersocietal process*, not merely an intergovernmental or interstate phenomenon”.⁸² Therefore “economic, psychological, cultural and social-structural dimensions” are important to understand the environment that influences policymakers.⁸³ The authors suggest the relevance of studying these dimensions both within and between internal societies of the states that are analyzed. The interactions of these relevant factors “shape the political environment in which governments function and define the political constraints under which they operate.”⁸⁴ One could analyze mainstream ideologies and opinions regarding this agreement between Iran and the U.S., studying what was being said about the deal and which states and individuals were being attacked. This may be relevant to understanding some of the internal divisions in each society. The authors, elaborate that analyzing conflicts in this fashion may help us provide “levers for change in the direction of conflict resolution, by challenging the monolithic image of the enemy that parties in conflict tend to hold and enabling them to deal with each other in a more differentiated way.”⁸⁵

Their third proposition is “*International conflict is a multifaceted process of mutual influence*, not only a contest in the exercise of coercive power”.⁸⁶ This means that there is an added complexity in the relationship between the conflicting parties as they respectively try to morph and shape the behavior of the other. The authors state that conflicts are occurring when we observe a clash of interests between two or more parties. These clashing interests may be based on a perception of a threat or an actual threat alike. The authors take into consideration influence strategies in international conflict. The assumption that power is central, is relaxed and the notion that there are different factors that shape the relationship is welcomed. The focus is put on the so-called “carrots and sticks”. The use of positive incentives is important in this case. The authors suggest that in the positive incentives’ toolbox, there must be more strategies to complement the classical “rewards, promises, or confidence-building measures most readily available”.⁸⁷ For instance, responsiveness as a strategy is valued positively by the authors, as “it allows each party to exert influence on the other through positive steps that are within its own capacity to take”.⁸⁸ The authors then argue that when there is a stalemate, parties are tempted to negotiate because maintaining the conflict is less attractive than reaching a mutual adjustment of preferences that leads to

an agreement. The line of reasoning of this proposition may be relevant to our case of study. Diplomats and negotiators for the JCPOA are likely to have obtained a positive outcome because of mutual reassurance, the promise to lift many sanctions, and because Iran agreed to cooperate and to open its nuclear plants for international inspection.⁸⁹ This process will be analyzed in more depth in a subsequent chapter.

The fourth and last proposition argues “*international conflict is an interactive process with an escalatory, self-perpetuating dynamic, not merely a sequence of action and reaction by stable actors.*”⁹⁰ The authors argue that the interaction between the parties leads to a strengthening of the conflict because the environment is governed by norms, and rules and guided by a set of images that may lead policymakers to an escalation trap.⁹¹ The authors suggest that this trend can be inverted with “skillful diplomacy, imaginative leadership, third-party intervention, and institutionalized mechanisms for managing and resolving conflict.”⁹² Here the stress is posed on the images and perceptions of the parties, and the cognitive restraints that are at play in the processing of new information, with the possibility that a “confirmation bias” comes into play in confirming negative images of the other and block and resist evidence that would apparently discourage these images and perceptions. This, accordingly, leads to the creation of self-fulfilling prophecies, inducing both parties to commit to hostile action as they expect from one another.⁹³ Therefore, this framework advocates for interactions that lead to “sharing perspectives, differentiating the enemy image, and developing a language of mutual reassurance and new *discourse* based on the norms of responsiveness and reciprocity.”⁹⁴

This connects clearly with our case and with the third proposition as well. The authors suggest that mutual hostility and distrust lead to a negative escalation that deepens the distance between the parties.⁹⁵ The authors propose that producing relevant knowledge on conflict, following this framework, is key to understanding the subtle mechanisms at play. The understanding of these dynamics helps us to understand how to reverse them and arguably opens a path for mutual reassurance and cooperation between parties.⁹⁶

Different socio-psychological factors are considered in this framework, added to the strictly political and diplomatic factors at play. These factors help us to make sense of the chaotic nature of the international arena, and the challenges that political leaders, elites, diplomats, and negotiators must face.⁹⁷ Often many foreign policy decisions seem irrational and driven by power and domination but analyzing them from

this perspective may open many doors that give us insights and perspectives on how certain policies and conflicts are dependent on perceptions, images, and trust. These propositions are in line with Zartman's suggestion that it is relevant to look at the process and not only at outcome. This approach tries to unveil many obscure mechanisms that other schools of thought in international relations arguably overlooked. Nevertheless, psychological factors are extremely volatile and difficult to analyze from a distance as discussed beforehand, but we will see subsequently how discourse analysis as a strategy and analytical tool is helpful to extract a socio-psychological proxy.

There is a link between the propositions presented here and the propositions adopted by Andriole et al., as their framework discusses the different components and variables that are important to look at in trying to explain foreign policy behavior. The authors are worried and preoccupied with what are the essential factors to analyze to pursue and deliver a comprehensive study that aims to explain foreign policy behavior. They state that in analysis there are political components; a societal component; a psychological component; an interstate component; a global component; and a "type of state" variable. They nevertheless claimed that psychological factors are the most elusive when doing research. The psychological component is "an array of potential variables which apply to foreign policy decision-makers, including personality traits, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, past experiences, and social background factors."⁹⁸ They introduce content analysis as a valuable operational option to extrapolate data about the ideological belief systems of foreign policy elites.⁹⁹

Here is where we can use the contributions of Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse-Historical Approach, which is a form of content analysis, to extrapolate the data on the ideological belief systems which as noted by Andriole et al. and Fisher, Kelman, and Nan are important socio-psychological variables that can give us precious insights for our purpose. Texts are important to look at as they are "sites of social struggle in that they manifest traces of differing ideological fights for dominance and hegemony."¹⁰⁰ Hence, ideologies and belief systems are the socio-psychological factors that are possible to study and analyze from the discourses that are produced via text.

Therefore, the stress is put on the "discursive dimensions of ideologies" and how these ideologies are represented and reproduced. Van Dijk stresses that this can be done via a multidisciplinary framework as it is not apt to study discourse and ideologies strictly in one discipline.

The focus will be put on the political discourses that can be “propaganda, political advertising, political speeches, media interviews, political talk shows on TV, party programs, ballots, and so on.”¹⁰¹ Analyzing all these different political discourses is not feasible in this work, therefore it is opted to choose for political speeches. This will help us understand the interplay between economic techniques of statecraft and techniques of propaganda.

Expanding the Framework with Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is helpful for our study as it can “demystify the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the underlying ideologies”.¹⁰² CDA can be understood as an approach to analysis and not strictly as a single method. One of CDA’s goals is to look beyond the text and take into consideration the institutional and sociocultural context.¹⁰³ Ideologies are understood at a very general level as “fundamental beliefs of a group and its members.”¹⁰⁴ Interestingly, Ideologies are often referred to in the literature and in discourse, following also the Marxist line of reasoning, as a form of “false consciousness” or a set of beliefs that are opposed to true scientific knowledge.¹⁰⁵

Ideologies could be developed and adopted because they are in some way a mental framework intended to organize social representations, providing foundations and identification for groups and their members. Social practices such as language and discourse are influenced by ideologies. Ideologies are influenced by how language and discourses are used as well. Since ideologies indirectly control social practices and discourse in general, the obvious further social function of ideologies is that they enable or facilitate joint action, interaction, and cooperation of ingroup members, as well as interactions with outgroup members.¹⁰⁶ Ideologies are learned mostly by consuming texts and listening to other members of the group.¹⁰⁷ Some discourse genres are explicitly intended to teach ideologies to group members and/or newcomers, such as political propaganda, party rallies etc.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is logical to extrapolate from discourses how these ideologies are expressed - or not-, and Critical Discourse Analysis is a helpful tool for this pursuit. Extrapolating these ideologies from texts produced by presidents and relevant actors in the international arena may help us understand whether the effectiveness of economic sanctions is dependent on the ideologies expressed by them and their perceptions.

Ideologies give rise to conflict and struggle, and as Van Dijk argues, different attitudes that are related to different societal areas may be organized by basic beliefs about the negative properties of the Other. Therefore, ideologies are the basic social representations of the beliefs that are shared by a group, and they precisely function as the framework that then defines the overall coherence of these beliefs.¹⁰⁹

So, what we may hold as a truthful representation of reality, others may think that is only a belief, an opinion, prejudice, a fantasy, an ideology, and a perception. Nevertheless, there are also forms of knowledge that go to constitute the socio-cultural common ground of a group or culture. Discourses are based on this number of beliefs to be comprehensible.

Extrapolating Ideologies with Discourse Analysis:

Ruth Wodak, one of the most influential scholars in Critical Discourse Analysis made an important contribution by inserting history and time in discourse analysis, and she developed what is known as the “discourse historical approach”, intended to explore how discourse changes throughout time. Language for Wodak, is not powerful on its own, but it is a means to maintain power by the powerful figures that make it. Importantly in this pursuit, it is noted that discourses as objects of our investigation are a dynamic entity that are open to continuation and reinterpretation.¹¹⁰

So, we divide the analysis of media discourse into two major blocks to do a systematic analysis. One that focuses on the actual Textual Analysis and the other on Contextual Analysis.

Textual Analysis is done by looking at:

1. **Layout and structural organization:** This is the part of the analysis that should focus on “surface” elements of the text, such as the title, the length, and whether it is accompanied by photographs, graphics et similia.

2. **Objects (Topic)**

In this part of the analysis, the focus is put on: “Which objects (Topics) does the text construct?” Carvalho refers to them as objects and not topics to mark the idea that discourse creates and

constitutes the reality at stake rather than just referring to it. “What events/specific issues are associated with the broader issue under consideration?”¹¹¹

3. Actors

In this part, the focus is put on: “Who does the article (text) mention? How are those actors represented?”¹¹² The interest is in the individuals, and the institutions that are referred to. Textual production is central in constructing the images of social actors and in defining their identities. The centrality is in understanding what is the framing power of certain actors in relation to media. Moreover, the analysis of the representation of actors is linked to the analysis of their discursive strategies.

4. Language, Grammar, and Rhetoric

In this part of the analysis, the centrality is in identifying the key concepts and their relationship with wider cultural and ideological frameworks. The vocabulary and the style are important dimensions in constructing meanings.¹¹³

5. Discursive Strategies

As mentioned before, discursive strategies are linked to the analysis of actors. Understanding the discursive strategies is relevant to understanding how they morph and manipulate discourse production to achieve a certain effect. Carvalho stresses the fact that discursive strategies can be “more or less conscious”.

Some of the relevant discursive strategies that can be mentioned here are ***Framing, Positioning, and Politicization***.

Framing is defined as the organization of discourse “according to a certain point of view or perspective.”¹¹⁴ It is important to mention that following Carvalho, framing is not seen as “something” that can be done intentionally or not. It is an inherent characteristic when addressing reality. Thus, the issue is not to understand whether framing is taking part or not, but *how* a certain issue is framed.¹¹⁵

Framing is composed by *selection* and *composition*. **Selection** is “an exercise of inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgments, etc.”¹¹⁶ **Composition** “is the arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning.”¹¹⁷

Positioning is another relevant discursive strategy that describes how a certain social actor is being constructed and constituted through discourse. **Legitimation** consist in “justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons.”¹¹⁸ While **Politicization** is “the attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality.”¹¹⁹ One discursive strategy that may be relevant in our analysis is the construction of responsibility. This one is more specific and discretionary strategy.¹²⁰

6. Ideological standpoints

As was mentioned earlier, ideologies are central in the CDA approach, and the notion that ideologies are embedded in discourses is significant. Identifying the ideological standpoints in texts is crucial as “they involve fundamental motivations and justifications for keeping or changing a certain status quo.”¹²¹

All these 6 aspects that are relevant to look at when analyzing a text are interlinked with one another. So, identifying ideological standpoints can be done by looking at the other elements such as rhetoric and discursive strategies.

The Contextual Analysis is done by:

Comparative-synchronic Analysis: Carvalho tells us that “comparative-synchronic analysis means looking at various representations of an issue at the time of the writing of one specific news text.”¹²² Therefore, comparing one text with another one on the same issue is relevant to do. We may also look at texts produced in the same selected timeframe, by different authors. Doing this is relevant as it gives us a more complete image of reality instead of focusing on one individual representation or text. This is done to enhance the “critical reading of discourse and help identify the specific discursive traits.”¹²³

Historical-diachronic Analysis: The historical approach is interested in examining “the course of social matters and their wider political, social and economic context.”¹²⁴ The historical context and conditions are an important part to take into consideration for our analysis. It is relevant to look at the temporal evolution of discourses to understand how the given issue evolved in time. One central question that Carvalho stresses is “How did representations of reality impact on subsequent ones?”¹²⁵ In this work, following these different but at the same time interlinked approaches, I hope to provide a more concise analysis of how representations and discourses shaped and influenced the process and the outcome in our selected case study. It is important to mention that this approach refuses the commitment to “engaged neutrality” as the idea of a value-free science is called into question. As a student embarking on this research project, I bring with me my own underlying ideologies and belief systems and it is important to stress this for the readers to know it.

Consequently, this approach is useful to understand a layer concerning the evolution of the use of economic sanctions and the relationship between the United States and Iran.¹²⁶ Therefore, studying discourses in this fashion is central to understanding how speeches and texts may have shaped and impacted on the evolution of the relationship between the two countries in negotiation settings and how they may have affected the positive or negative outcome of economic sanctions.

It is important here to acknowledge the potential errors that research entails. In this regard, Peters warns that when conducting research, it is important to understand and make sure that the observed outcomes and conclusions of the analysis are in fact attributable to the variables studied and not functions of other ignored factors.¹²⁷

The fallacy of reaching fast conclusions to provide policy-relevant knowledge and causal mechanisms derives also from the inability to state in the research the potential weaknesses of the research and in the overconfidence of the researcher who claims to be able to provide a study that can provide generalizations about a certain phenomenon. Of course, this present study can be a victim of the same possible errors, miscalculations, and unconscious inclusion or exclusion of certain factors, and it is my intention to acknowledge the possible biases and ideological baggage that the researcher brings when doing analysis and hope that the readers will be able to notice and critique them.

Data:

In this section, the rationale behind the collection of data is discussed and explained. This study relies on previous literature, official state communication, and discourses produced by relevant Actors such as presidents and officials who were engaged in the issues that are discussed in this text. I will analyze, following Carvalho's guidelines, and identify on the critical discourse moments. Carvalho tells us that a helpful way to advance discourse analysis is firstly to locate critical discourse moments, i.e., "periods that involve specific happenings, which may challenge the established discursive positions."¹²⁸ In the words of Carvalho: "Analyzing those moments allows for the identification of discursive turns and/or continued lines of argumentation at particularly important times in the social construction of an issue."¹²⁹

To analyze this critical discourse moment, the data was collected from official sources of the white house online, by searching into a database of the 'Iran Primer'. It was chosen to look at two different ideological cultures by analyzing figures that tend to be considered "liberal/moderate and conservative/hardliner". This is why the analysis will focus mostly on Pompeo, Netanyahu, Obama, Rouhani, Zarif and Khamenei. The material was selected because they were chronologically relevant to the specific historical moments before, at the time of the agreement and at the time of withdrawal from the agreement. Some declarations collected took the form of 'statement' and 'reply'. Therefore, there is a connection between the speeches given. These personalities speak through these indirect communications, but they also speak to the internal audience(s).

Moreover, the speeches and the text produced in our selected case study are relevant as they address in the title and/or in the body of the speech and text the instruments of economic sanctions and address their concerns and/or demands to the other party.¹³⁰ Moreover, the material addresses largely the topics of conflict and relation with the other party, the nuclear deal discussions and economic sanctions. Therefore, comparing the texts and speeches produced by these different actors might help to identify the recurring or different discourses in time, by analyzing significantly the events, the issues at stake and how they address the relation between themselves.

Nevertheless, a more systemic approach for data collection may be needed for future research that aims to provide a more extensive analysis on the topic addressed, by ruling out instances of possible semi-random selection of the content. It will be beneficial for the sake of having more comprehensiveness to

expand the corpus analyzed to include media outlets and social media posts as well from the relevant figures, to compare and understand as well how discourses were produced in these different historical and communication contexts at different levels.

An inventory with access to the full transcriptions of the speeches analyzed can be found in the appendix. The selected timeframe of the analysis is: **2012-2018**

Chapter 3

Analyzing the Issue at Stake: Historical Background

Introduction: How we got here in the first place?

The United States and Iran have an intricate and complex history, and currently maintain severed relations after the 1979 Revolution and the case of the hostage crisis. Before this *critical juncture*, the two countries maintained a positive relationship. The ruling family in pre-revolution Iran was the Pahlavi family, which enjoyed support from the U.S. and other foreign powers. The relationship between the Shah and the United States grew throughout the 50's, the 60's and the '70s. Throughout these periods of time, the two countries provided support and cooperation based on common regional and transregional interests. In 1955 and 1959 the two countries worked closely to seal defense and aid agreements. In this period, the U.S. worked to develop and adopt a new policy towards 'Third World' countries. Castiglioni, in her analysis of documents of the United States Foreign Affairs department showcased how the policy of the U.S in Iran was influenced by principles of the Modernization Theory developed in U.S academia. The will to 'help' third world countries in their effort to develop was strictly interrelated with the efforts to penetrate the region to avoid communist expansion, maintain stability and order, and opening and maintaining new markets for the western economy.¹³¹

Nevertheless, it appears from the documents of the Foreign Affairs Department analyzed by Castiglioni, that there were many instances of miscalculation, deterministic thinking, and manipulation that brought throughout the years to a progressive culmination of discontent brought about by the 'top-down' reforms that were promoted by the shah with close support from the U.S. The support continued throughout years and presidencies, as the role of Iran in the context of the 50'-70's was central for the hegemonic interests of the U.S. in their efforts of expansion of influence while containing the political, geographical and ideological competition posed by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, throughout the years corruption and non-functional political institutions paved the way for discontent in the face of the reforms and the political trajectory that Iran was partaking in. In 1964 the country signed the Status of Forces Agreement - SOFA - that led to the acquisition of new weapons from the USA, sparking, thus, new waves of protests

and demonstrations that were again capitalized efficiently by the Ayatollah Khomeini, who was continuing to expanding his anti-American discourse, by underlying the ‘colonial’ like status that Iran was undergoing with the consent of the Shah.¹³² These are few events that can give us some context of how and why then anti-Americanism is one feature of the events that led to the Revolution in ‘79. Nevertheless, it is not the scope of this work to provide an extensive account of this period.

Gelvin reports that in 1977, President Carter referred to Iran-Persia as “*An island of tranquility in a sea of turbulence.*”¹³³ It is reported then, that during the ruling period of the Shah, Iran had one of the most repressive national intelligences, and political and associational liberties were controlled and limited. It is believed that revenues derived from oil were supporting most of the Pahlavi family in their personal expenses, and that the family accumulated personally billions of dollars.^[147] The now-famous Ayatollah Khomeini was a fervid critique of the Pahlavian state and then managed to be one of the leaders of the ‘79 revolution that was able to successfully capitalize the situation of discontent in Iran under the Shah and was able to promote his worldview extensively. Therefore, he continued to be the central figure that was able to channel and voice discontent for the reforms and the Pahlavi state. It is reported that “the episode of SOFA polluted the image of the Americans in Iran, that was already damaged by the attempts of the shah to impose occidental values in a reluctant Iranian society.”¹³⁴

In the ‘60s Iran was going through a period of extensive internal reforms referred to as “The White Revolution”. These reforms led to the reformulation of the socio-economic life of the country based on an effort to ‘modernize’ the country. These efforts encountered many difficulties on the internal front and critics from traditional societal groups had to confront the strong intelligence and repressive agencies that were not seeing with good eye dissenting voices. Throughout 1963 there were instances of demonstrations that led to clashes between the protesters and the repressive forces of the state. Some demonstrated to support and show solidarity to the fervent critic of the regime, ayatollah Khomeini, who was arrested after giving a speech in Qom where he attacked the reforms partaken by the Shah. His main argument was that the Shah was selling out the country’s independence to foreign forces. He appealed to historical parallelism both significant from a religious point of view and from a national point of view, such as the 680 d.c. martyrdom of Hussein and the XVIII concessions to extract natural resources of the country given by the Pahlavi ruler at the time to western powers.¹³⁵

In the immediate period before the revolution, Khomeini was in exile in France where he continued to be an advocate of a needed change and a fervent dissident of the Pahlavi state. The revolution in 1979 sparked with the help of his ideas and figure, but other important groups and components of the population were active – such as oil field workers, students, and members of the Iranian communist party known as Tudeh - nevertheless, the Muslim clerics managed to seize a fair amount of power and drafted the constitution based on Islamic principles.¹³⁶

Yet the country sustained a certain degree of relations with Israel in the initial phase of post-revolution Iran in an “instrumental” fashion and kept it secret. Between 1980 and 1983, Iran purchased circa \$500 million worth of arms from the Israelis. The two countries at that time had one common unpleasant neighbor – Saddam Hussein. Tension started to ramp up after suicide bombing attacks were directed at the American and French legations in Beirut. These forces were in Lebanon as part of a multinational peacekeeping force, and after these attacks, the U.S. Marines left Beirut. These attacks were linked to Hizballah – a Shi’i militant faction - and therefore to Iran for their support for the activities of this group. Nevertheless, throughout the ‘80s there were still instances of secret, specific relations between the U.S and post-revolutionary Iran such as the famous Iran-contra affair - an arms-for-hostages deal. The Americans maintained a high level of skepticism when dealing with Iran but maintained this channel of communication.¹³⁷

Since the hostage crisis and the bombings in Beirut, the U.S. remained skeptical about the Iranian regime and later tried to adopt various strategies to combat the Iranian regime. One of these policies that the U.S adopted, and that are of interest here are economic techniques of statecraft, and more specifically economic sanctions. Iran remained isolated from the international community for a remarkable period due to its revolutionary spirit that led the political elite to fight against the foreign presence in the region, and due to its aggressive behavior and rhetoric against the West, Israel, and Arab countries deemed to be allied with the U.S such as Saudi Arabia.

From the standpoint of the Iranian revolutionary leadership guided by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini back then and by Khamenei currently, the issues of the region need to be addressed by local key players and not by foreign powers. This line of thinking became prominent because of the history that Iran had with imperial powers and their meddling in Iranian internal politics such as the U.K. and the U.S. We need to underline the fact that the United Kingdom and the U.S. in 1953 through the CIA

and the MI6 orchestrated and accomplished a coup in the country, overthrowing the elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh, who pursued a policy of nationalization of the oil industry and policy of independence that collided with the interest of the U.S.¹³⁸

The coup led to the reinstallation of the Shah that fled the country when Mossadegh took power. Iran after the return of the Shah was central to U.S. policy in the West Asian region. The policy was labeled the “Twin-pillars strategy”, and its core outcome was confronting the Soviet threat in the region. The policy relied on Iran and Saudi Arabia as promoters of U.S. interests in the region.¹³⁹ This fact is important to mention to understand from the standpoint of the revolutionaries where this mistrust grew against the U.S. and Western powers in general. As Milani describes, Khomeini opposed the fact that the two countries were cooperating and defined the Shah as “America’s Shah”. Therefore, anti-Americanism was a core feature of the revolutionary rhetoric and ideology.¹⁴⁰

As happened with other revolutionary movements that succeeded in their effort to take control of central institutions, the Iranian revolutionaries in the ecstasy of their power became active in the export of their revolution in the neighboring countries. They did so by supporting a series of armed groups and insurgents. Their ideals circulated in the region and a series of “fifth columns” were established. The “fifth columns” are groups of militants that with the support of Iran pursued a policy of destabilization of the status-quo and calculated attacks on foreign powers’ targets. One prominent example of a “fifth column” central to the Iranians interests in the area that was mentioned earlier is the Lebanese group Hezbollah.¹⁴¹ This fact was not welcomed by the U.S. leadership, the Israelis, and by Saudi Arabia, which saw Iran as a major threat to the geo-political “stability” of the region.

Iran’s Nuclear Program

One major concern when talking about Iran is the country’s nuclear program, which can be traced back to Shah’s rule with the help and guidance of the United States and other European allies that provided technology and know-how. The program stopped briefly after the revolution but resumed in 1999, without delivering a notification to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a body that was

instituted to control and monitor nuclear related technological advancement, to ensure the peaceful character of such advancements.¹⁴²

The nuclear program in post-revolutionary Iran gained momentum in the mid-1980s with the help of countries such as Pakistan, Argentina and the black-market networks linked with Q. A. Khan.¹⁴³ Now all this information was not available to the international community at that time, and it became public knowledge in 2002. During the early 2000s in Iran, President Khatami and the moderate reformists were in charge, and during those times there were instances, such as the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, where the U.S. and Iran worked together as they had common interests. The U.S. relied on and cooperated with Iran to secure its war against the Taliban. This was welcomed by the Iranians as they were in tension with the Taliban as well. It was not in the interest of these two players to have a radical and assertive group willing to extend its power in the area. Arjomand reports that James Dobbin, the Chief U.S. negotiator on Afghanistan, said that Iran was “comprehensively helpful.”¹⁴⁴

The sentiments in Washington, where the Republicans were at the head of the state, nevertheless were heated and heightened hostility towards the Iranians led to the refusal of proposals of contact made by the Iranian leadership at the time, and the option of confrontational policy and regime change was preferred in Washington.¹⁴⁵ This moment was not seized and led to aggravated relations, and the period that subsequently came is marked by heightened mistrust. Internally the case was used more by hawks and doves of both countries to accuse the other side of doing business with an actor with whom it was not beneficial to deal, as it symbolized evil.

From timid signs of cooperation to heightened discord

As was mentioned before, the problems related to Iran’s nuclear program escalated in 2002 when an opposition group in Iran, leaked information about a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz and a heavy water plant in Arak. This event led to a moment of crisis, and the IAEA inspected these sites after the organization received this information. The U.S. imposed an ultimatum on the Iranian regime and demanded full cooperation. The Americans warned that if there was no cooperation, the matter would have been brought to the UN Security Council. Arjomand describes that the European allies that were dissatisfied with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, started independent negotiations with the Iranians to resolve

the nuclear issue. The negotiations led to a preliminary accord, and the Iranians signed the Protocol on international inspections under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The deal was signed in Paris in 2004 by Iran and the EU-3 (France, Germany, and England). The U.S., with the guidance of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, rejected the deal and refused to participate in it. At that time the U.S. presidency was in the hands of George Bush. It is important to mention as well that at that time in Iran, the President Khatami whom we could put in the reformist and moderate spectrum in the context of Iranian politics, was still in charge.

After this reformist phase in Iran, the hardliners won the elections and Mr. Ahmadinejad took power. According to Arjomand, the policy of regime change pursued by the Bush administration gave an incentive to Iranian hardliners to promote nuclear development as a deterrent. We need to spend a few words about Ahmadinejad's career before proceeding because it will help us to better understand the policy outcomes of his presidency. He was a university student and at the time of the revolution, he joined the revolutionary groups. He then joined the Basij militias at the time of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). He served as mayor of Tehran winning the elections in 2003 before serving as president of the Iranian Republic.

As Arjomand explains, after the election Ahmadinejad rewarded the IRGC and increased the development budget design to help the Basij win the governmental contracts by 74 percent.¹⁴⁶ These groups linked to the IRGC grew stronger and they developed into cartels that pursued their own interests. The growth of an economic-military cartel has repercussions on the functioning of many areas of the country, such as effectiveness and foreign policy since it can sabotage many policies pursued by the president that don't fit their goals for instance.¹⁴⁷

Ahmadinejad had an attitude that was firmly far from the one adopted by his predecessors. For example, Khatami supported the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while Ahmadinejad opposed it and asserted strongly his enmity towards Israel. Another point that divided the position of Ahmadinejad and the hardliners from the reformists is their position on the nuclear program and development of nuclear technology. The hardliners in the military and the IRGC contend that Iran needed a bomb as a national security goal. Even before the election of Ahmadinejad a bill was passed in the hardliner-dominated parliament – the Majles – to resume the uranium enrichment program, and according to Arjomand the

narrative that Iran was “bullied” by the Americans and the “axis of evil” speech made by Bush in 2002 gave the hardliners momentum, arousing popular indignation.¹⁴⁸

The signs of progress that were made in 2003 were dismissed in 2005 when Iran notified the IAEA that it would resume its nuclear activities, and in August there was a rejection of the EU-3 Long Term Agreement because there was a feeling in the leadership that the deal was not beneficial to Iran. This brought a major hindrance in the relations between Iran, the U.S., and its allies. The agreement that was made by Iran and the EU-3 was dismissed. In 2006 Iran celebrated its first enrichment of a minor amount of uranium at 3.5 percent. The signs of progress of Iran’s nuclear program continued for some years, and preoccupation ramped up within EU and U.S. leaderships. However, after these events, some negotiations with the West resumed. The U.S. at the beginning of these new negotiations refused to engage, but Secretary Rice was inclined to join after a first phase of reluctance. The negotiations led to a deadlock and sanctions were imposed on Iran by the UN Security Council. It is reported that in 2006 the National Security Strategy said that the U.S. faces “*No greater challenge from a single country than from Iran.*”¹⁴⁹

The nuclear policy pursued by Ahmadinejad was popular between the masses and the middle class, and he had the support of the hardliners in the Majles and the Supreme Leader.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, Iran continued to work in a dual-track fashion, balancing advancement in the nuclear program and defiance of international commitments and openings for negotiations and talks.

Mr. Ali-Larijani was appointed as a negotiator with the EU-3. Arjomand stresses that after an initial phase in which the U.S. administration did not engage in these meetings, Secretary of State Rice was inclined to join them after the delicate situation in Iraq escalated by the war of invasion of U.S. and British troops. However, Ahmadinejad and Larijani failed to comply with the deadlines set in these negotiations and in December 2006, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1737 that imposed more sanctions on Iran. In 2008, the installation of 6000 new centrifuge machines for enrichment was announced. Nonetheless, after a first period of excitement about the revival of the nuclear program, some negotiations with the West resumed. Nevertheless, another round of sanctions by the UN Security Council was passed with Resolution 1803 in 2008.¹⁵¹

In 2008, Obama was elected president of the U.S. and there was a policy shift that led to more cooperation with the allies and Iran. But these efforts to bring more cooperation to the agreements were not swift and easy. The years 2008-2012 are characterized by a deadlock in the negotiations between the parties. No general agreement was reached, and sanctions were imposed on Iran by the U.S. in concert with the EU as a response to 2011's announcement that Iran intended to triple its rate of 20 percent-enriched uranium production. These multilateral sanctions entered into force in 2012.¹⁵²

Internally, the Iranian power-sharing structure is based on various institutions and groups that sometimes work in isolation, pursuing different outcomes. Generally, the Foreign Policy of the country is directed by the elected President and by the Foreign Minister, all under the supervision and approval of the Supreme Leader. At the same time, there are forces that grew in parallel with these institutions such as the IRGC.

The IRGC thrived with the presidency of Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) and they had the chance to embolden their economic position in the country, having in their hands' various economic assets and companies. Moreover, the IRGC see the reformist and moderate forces in Iran as dangerous for the radical no-compromise ideology that they want to push forward to secure 'national honor.'¹⁵³

Finding ways to build bridges.

After the election of Barack Obama as president of the U.S., there was a will to engage more deeply in the P5+1 talks. In October 2009 there was an agreement between the parties to follow a U.S.-initiated and IAEA-backed proposal to fuel the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), and Iran agreed to do a "fuel swap". In synthesis, Iran would ship 3.5 percent enriched uranium and would in return get fuel for TRR from France and Russia. But these efforts were not met with concord in Iran and there was a will to change the terms of the accord. These changes were not met with sympathy by the other members, and lastly, in 2010 another round of sanctions against Iran was imposed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1929. These sanctions enforced an arms embargo and the ban on Iran to carry nuclear-capable ballistic missile tests. After these UN sanctions, the U.S congress decided to pass a "Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act". The European Union followed suit and imposed further sanctions against Iran.¹⁵⁴

Iran replied in 2011 by announcing that it intended to triple the rate of 20 percent-enriched uranium production. The position of the U.S. tightened, and legislation was passed that allowed the U.S. to sanction foreign banks if they continued to process transactions with the Central Bank of Iran.¹⁵⁵

These years are characterized by a stalemate in the negotiations between the parties. An important fact that contributed to this deadlock is the report made by the IAEA, which made light on the nuclear ambitions of Iran, especially its nuclear weapon program. This led to a new round of sanctions that targeted the Central Bank of Iran, its petroleum and oil products. These sanctions were done in concert with the European Union, but not with the Security Council since China and Russia refused to adopt new measures. These sanctions entered into force in the summer of 2012. The sanctions barred third countries from dealing with Iran's oil sector, but there were 20 countries that were granted waivers. Moreover, there was a major freezing of all the assets and properties of all institutions related to the Government of Iran and its financial system.¹⁵⁶ More talks were held by the parties in 2012 but no substantial agreement was designed.

By 2013, as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs and negotiator Wendy Sherman indicates, Iran had 19,000 operating centrifuges, and the sanctions imposed hurt the economy of the country but did not stop their nuclear ambitions.¹⁵⁷ In her essay written for Foreign Affairs in 2018, she claimed that even the threat of a military attack on Iran by Washington, Israel, and Saudi Arabia would have given the Iranians *"an excellent excuse to accelerate its efforts – and to do so with even greater secrecy"*.¹⁵⁸

In the elections of June 2013, the pragmatic and reformist Hassan Rouhani won the presidential elections. We need to mention that he was a veteran in nuclear related negotiations, as he was appointed as the country's chief negotiator between 2003 and 2005 and was the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council. Milani in a piece written for Foreign Affairs stresses that when he interviewed Rouhani in the mid-1990s, he found him to be *"intelligent, cunning, self-assured, and cautious with words. For a man of the cloth, his answers to my questions were non-ideological. Then, as now, he was pragmatic – someone with whom one could do business."*¹⁵⁹ His policy according to the author is one of working with both factions – the reformists and the hardliners. He started his program of rapprochement with the West shortly after he was elected and worked firmly to secure a deal for Iran that was beneficial to both parties. He was backed and supported by former reformist presidents of Iran Hashemi Rafsanjani and Khatami.

As Milani described he knew that he had to work in collaboration with the Supreme Leader to protect his political agenda and make it effective. He had to work and navigate in a highly polarized environment, being cautious of not being targeted by the hardliners for his engagement with the West. Principally his top priority was lifting the sanctions but keeping in mind “Iran’s national interest.” The parties then started to work together to find a solution to the nuclear file, and an initial Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) was designed on November 24th, 2013, in Geneva. The Iranian persons that were appointed as negotiators were Abbas Araghchi and Majid Takht-Ravanchi. Rouhani appointed as his Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. Sherman explains that before the deal of 2013, there were extended talks between the U.S and Iranian officials in Oman. The backchannel was built with the help of the sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said, and after a round of talks, the possibility of arranging a meeting came to life. Interestingly Sherman describes that these meetings were already happening before the election of Rouhani, indicating that there was already the determination from Khamenei to cooperate to solve the nuclear dispute.¹⁶⁰

On July 14, 2015, in Vienna Austria, the P5+1 states and Iran reached an agreement and signed the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In the preface of the deal, we can read that the plan will “ensure that Iran’s nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful” and that “Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons”.¹⁶¹ The agreement installed a monitoring system. The IAEA had the power to monitor, verify, and provide updates on whether the parties of the agreement were complying successfully with the terms of the accord. The agreement also laid out that in exchange for Iran’s collaboration on its nuclear program, many sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council will be terminated. The plan sets out that “The E3/EU+3 will meet at a ministerial level every 2 years in order to review and assess progress and to adopt appropriate decisions by consensus”.¹⁶² The plan has set some deadlines for many different aspects regarding the enrichment of uranium, research & development, and stockpiles. The plan relies on transparency and confidence-building measures.

This agreement produced a comprehensive lifting of all sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council and the multilateral and unilateral sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear program. Under article III of the Preamble and General Provisions, we read that Iran will fully enjoy its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and it will be treated in the same manner as that of any other non-nuclear weapon state party of

the NPT.¹⁶³ The JCPOA addresses both political and technical issues related to the installment and phasing out of certain centrifuges. The deal gave power to the IAEA to continuously monitor the enrichment-related infrastructure at Natanz. In the deal, there are set the limits that Iran was entitled to hold and to enrich, such as the limit of 300kg of 3.67 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride or the equivalent in other chemical forms. The deal reduced the number of Iran's centrifuges by two-thirds and led to the redesign of the core of the heavy-water reactor so that the production of weapons-grade plutonium was not feasible.¹⁶⁴

The plan had set some deadlines at a time limit of 15 years, after which Iran will be allowed to obtain some concessions regarding its nuclear program. For example, after 15 years they are granted permission to build other heavy water reactors or reprocess spent fuel. In all this, the IAEA will have full access and monitoring to the facilities and plants for 25 years and a long-term presence in Iran. It is then stated clearly that Iran will not engage in any activities that can contribute to the development of a nuclear explosive device and there is a never-ending prohibition on obtaining the weapon. These measures, as estimated, extended the time of production of a nuclear bomb from a few months to more than one year.¹⁶⁵

The plan nevertheless was scrapped by the Trump administration and this level of cooperation and collaboration was destroyed by a stroke of a pen. The Trump administration adopted a non-cooperative stance against sanctions to compel the Iranians to agree to a plan that was more favorable in the eyes of the U.S administration and its allies in the middle eastern arena, most importantly Israel and Saudi Arabia (at that time).¹⁶⁶

Nevertheless, this did not come much as a surprise, as we will see in the analysis of the discourses, as there were many instances during the time that the deal was signed, where the Republicans and Israeli leaders assertively expressed their disregard and their preoccupations concerning the nuclear deal, by framing it as a "bad deal".

One step forward, three steps backwards:

In this section of the work, I will go through the analysis of the texts and speeches produced by the relevant figures in our case study. The focus will be put on Official state content, to provide a preliminary understanding of how language and rhetoric were used. What were ideological underpinnings, belief systems, and images of the other driving the debate and how these discourses interplayed, changed and influenced over time the relation between the two actors. The speeches and texts analyzed address economic sanctions, the JCPOA and the negotiations concerning Iranian nuclear proliferation. The analysis is divided in different critical discourse moments. The selected time periods are: 2012-2018. The critical discourse moments are important as they coincide with the negotiations and the adoption of the JCPOA in the 2012-15 period and the election of Trump, the withdrawal from the deal and the imposition of the harshest sanctions regime on Iran.

Discourse Analysis 2012-2018:

The first texts analyzed in this period were produced by Obama during the implementation of the sanction regime on Iran; a speech of the Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei to the Iranian nuclear scientists; A speech given by the two actors when the deal was approved, and it came to force. The objective in this way will be to analyze how economic sanctions were talked about and how the representation of the other was perpetuated to see if we can find some indicators that may have been instrumental to successive negotiations. We will follow a chronological order to complete the analysis.

Khamenei on February 22, 2012:

“Supreme Leader’s Speech to Nuclear Scientists.”¹⁶⁷

In this text the Iranian supreme leader gives a speech to the academic and to the nuclear scientists. It is a salient and interesting text to analyze. It came a few months before the international community initiated a new stringent sanction regime against Iran. The supreme leader in this text brings on historical events, ideological events, other negative presentation, positive self-presentation and addresses thoroughly the issues of sanctions imposed on Iran and the policy and strategy that the country and ‘the people’ of Iran are adopting. There is the presence and prominences of topics and objects such as gratitude for the

scientists, significance of the work that they do for the national interest of Iran, the restored dignity thanks to the revolution, colonialism, resistance, religion, bullying and coercion from foreign hegemonic powers, asymmetrical power dynamics and sanctions.

The main topic is Nuclear and Technological advancement. Nuclear research is talked about as an “arena of historical significance with a source of national pride.” Respect, gratefulness, value of the service and significance of the work are the terms used by Khamenei to address the nuclear scientists.

The following excerpt addresses the nuclear scientists and the relevance of their work for the Iranian revolution and national pride: “The Revolution instilled a sense of dignity into our nation and our country. They tried to discourage our nation on many occasions. They tried to convince our people that they were incompetent. ‘Yes, you carried out a revolution, but you cannot run the country by yourselves. You cannot make progress. You cannot keep up with the world.’ Every scientific advance is a testimony to the competence of our nation. And your work in nuclear technology instilled a sense of dignity into this nation. This is one dimension of the significance of your work.”

Therefore, in this excerpt we can see how the discourse revolves around vehiculating an idea that there are external forces, i.e. the West, that are vociferous about claiming that non-western countries do not have a right to independence and to technological advancement. There is other-negative representation, positive self-representation, and the nuclear issue, that in this case is equivalent to technological advancement is presented as an essential feature for independence and dignity. Moreover, it is stated that the nuclear bomb will not be pursued, and that “They already know this”, and “from an ideological and fiqhi perspective, we consider developing nuclear weapons as unlawful.” Moreover, the use of sanctions and threats will “only strengthen our nation” and “sanctions, political pressure and other such things will not be effective.”

We can understand from this excerpt the ideological culture that is being vehiculated to the nuclear scientists and to the international community. There is the will to vehiculate a message to the international community that the nuclear research in Iran is meant to be pacific, and that economic sanctions as an instrument are seen by the Iranian leadership as a counterproductive tool that will only embolden them to be more resistant and non-cooperative.

If we link this speech in the historical context, we see how it is centered in a period where there were moves and countermoves from both parties. Nevertheless in 2012, the parties did not reach any substantial agreement on the state of nuclear advancement in Iran and the US in coordination with the international community, based on the concern that was revolving around Iranian nuclear activities, decided to impose a new round of sanctions. Nevertheless, multiple talks were held in 2012 but the parties did not arrive at any substantial agreement, and multiple rounds of sanctions were imposed throughout the year. In the following excerpt analyzed we will see how the administration talked about the new round of sanctions and what kind of discourse was vehiculated to the public, the international community and the Iranians in relation to the issue.

Title: Fact Sheet Sanctions Related to Iran

Date: July 2012

Author(s): Barack Obama, White House Staff¹⁶⁸

The following text is historically centered in the period before the parties engaged diplomatically to try and solve their dispute. The U.S and Iran were holding back-channel talks over the possibility of nuclear negotiations. It was a salient topic, as the international community was concerned at this stage about the possibility that Iran was close enough to design and produce a nuclear device. The IAEA held the same concerns as in February during a visit in Iran, the IAEA experts were not granted permission to carry a visit in the site of Parchin, a military site that was under the spotlight.¹⁶⁹ The U.S and their allies were significantly concerned, therefore they advanced and adopted, close collaboration with the relevant international actors such as the EU and the UN a new series of economic sanctions that were thought to be the strictest and harshest sanctions regime at the time ever imposed on Iran.

President Barack Obama:

“In July 2012, the Obama Administration took two actions to further isolate and penalize Iran for its refusal to live up to its international obligation regarding its nuclear program. They decided to hold accountable financial institutions that provided financial services to Iranian banks that are under U.S. sanctions for their connection to illicit activities. These steps are part of President Obama’s commitment

to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by raising the cost of Iran's defiance of the international community."¹⁷⁰

Building a Comprehensive Sanctions Strategy

Since taking office, President Obama has presented a *very clear choice* to the Iranian regime: *comply with its international nuclear obligations and benefit from the greater economic, political, and security integration that comes with being part of the international community or face growing consequences for non-compliance*. Iran has chosen to proceed down the path of international isolation and has therefore suffered from what President Ahmadinejad called in July 2012, "the most severe and strictest sanctions ever imposed on a country".

In this excerpt, we can see how the focus is put on the international community presenting the effort to isolate Iran for its own decisions. The Iranian regime is presented with the option to comply with international *nuclear* obligations to obtain all the benefits that derive from being part of the international community. The argument is presented in a way that puts the blame for non-cooperation on the Iranian counterpart. Sanctions are imposed not just for the existence of Iran and its internal politics, but for their effort to disregard the international community. Therefore, if it chooses to join the international community and satisfy the requirements the door is left open. The words of the Iranian president are quoted to legitimize in a way and give weight to the U.S. policy of sanctions in a way that represents them as an efficient tool for raising costs on the country. Iran in this context is positioned as a state that is living outside of a political community dominated by richness, growth, and prosperity. Being outside of this political community leads to poorness, punishment, and exclusion.

Focusing more on the narrative that the U.S. is not pursuing these actions in isolation but with the international community we can bring in this excerpt:

Rallying the International Community

"With President Obama's leadership, the United States gained the support of Russia, China, and other nations to pass United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929 in June 2010, which created the most comprehensive and stinging international sanctions the Iranian regime has ever faced.

The Obama Administration also worked with allies such as the European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, and others to adopt additional national measures to increase pressure on the Iranian regime, including in the financial, banking, insurance, transportation, and energy sectors. Iran is now cut off from large parts of the international financial system and we are working aggressively to isolate Iran even further. In one of the most recent actions, the European Union's embargo on Iranian oil went into full effect in July.

In this excerpt we can note how at the beginning of the paragraph the actors called upon for legitimacy were Russia, China, other nations and the UN. The objective of this campaign was meant to isolate and increase pressure on Iran. Therefore, the new round of sanctions that was imposed in July 2012 is linked in the discourse with the previous sanctions that were designed in 2010. This was the fifth executive order that was issued in 12 months targeting Iran.

Again, in this excerpt, we can see how the discourse is centered around creating an image of strong multilateral cooperation intended to “show the Iranian government that its actions have consequences”. Again, interesting to see how Iran is positioned regarding the issue. It is depicted in a fashion that centers the attention on their own actions. Sanctions are put in force, not because of a deliberate choice of the U.S. and the international community. Instead, they are put in force by a consensus that Iran’s activities are responsible for this aggressive isolation that is taking place. Interestingly the words used are “isolate, pressure, consequences”. The discourse does not unfold based on “punishment”. Moreover, it is not clear what are exactly the specific actions that are spurring this confrontational strategy. The actions are presented in a vague-like fashion of illicit activities and “actions”.

Title: Leader’s Speech in Meeting with Commanders of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps

Date: Sep 17, 2013.

Author: Ayatollah Khamenei.¹⁷¹

On September 17, 2013, Khamenei gave a speech during a meeting with commanders and officials of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. The full text of the speech is found on the official website Kamenei.ir. It is important to note that Rouhani won the elections in August 2013, and engagement with

the West to solve the nuclear dispute was part of his campaign. It is important to mention as it provides historical context to the excerpt.

Excerpt one:

"[..] In the eyes of these enemies, no one is more hated than our magnanimous Imam who was an outstanding personality and who was like a shining sun. They looked at him with respect, but they also showed enmity towards him from the bottom of their hearts because he resisted and because he was perceptive and wise due to two unique characteristics that he enjoyed: complete wisdom and complete decisiveness. He put up resistance in a determined way and he was like a barrier in the way of their progress and in the way of the harm which they wanted to inflict. This was why they were his enemies. Of course, as I said, they looked at him with respect. They knew about his greatness, but the greater he was, the angrier they became."

In excerpt 1 and 2 the discourse revolves around a religious and political story used to justify and create links with present actions in the international arena. The stress is put around global arrogance that is interested in subjugating and oppress nations to their will. Then, proceeding in the speech the discourse is centered on creating a historical link with a past historical personality, the Imam Ali Ridha:

Excerpt 2:

"Today, the same situation exists. They show the same hatred towards anybody who is committed to these main values and principles - that is to say, values which determine the political identity of the Revolution such as "[D]eal not unjustly, nor shall you be dealt with unjustly". They hate anybody who realizes that the problems the enemies created for the Islamic Republic are based on this outlook and who takes this path by adopting such an outlook and showing such resistance."

Here the other presented as "they" without giving a clear message on who is talked about. The other is positioned as being responsible for the actions that the Islamic Republic is conducting as the problems are created by the "enemies".

Excerpt 3:

Of course, the world of diplomacy is the world of smiling. They smile and ask to negotiate with us. They themselves offer to negotiate with us. A few days ago, one of the western politicians was asked, "You want to negotiate with Iran. This is while Iran is your enemy." He said, "Well, negotiations should be conducted with the enemy, not other people." That is to say, they admit that they are the enemies of Iran and they say this openly. The reason for their enmity is not the behavior of certain people. Rather, the reason is the true nature and identity of the Islamic Revolution. Everything that they say should be analyzed, interpreted and identified from this perspective.

We are not against proper and reasonable moves, whether in the world of diplomacy or in the world of domestic policies. I believe in the idea which was referred to as "heroic flexibility". Flexibility is necessary in many areas. It is very good and there is nothing wrong with it. But the wrestler who is wrestling against his opponent and who shows flexibility for technical reasons should not forget who his opponent is and what he is doing. This is the main condition. Our politicians too should know what they are doing, who they are faced with, who their opponent is and which area the opposing side wants to attack. They should pay attention to this point.

In this last excerpt the main topic touched is that of diplomacy, negotiations and engagement with the other. The other is once more nominated vaguely, in this case as a “western politician”. Khamenei positions the other as a product of a system that is willing to suppress the identity of the Islamic Revolution. Then proceeds to clear to the officials the position regarding negotiations. He does so by using the term “heroic flexibility” to provide legitimation to engaging in talks with the west if “the politicians know what they are doing [...]” He uses a metaphor when he compares the politicians with wrestlers engaged in wrestling with his opponent. The metaphor in this speech serves the function to provide support for technical flexibility when dealing with the opponent. In the speech given Khamenei did not speak about sanctions, but he did talk about nuclear weapons and vehiculates the idea that the issue is fabricated by the west to punish the Islamic Republic for its own values of ‘resistance’.

This text from the elements that we can extrapolate from it, can be interpreted as meant to vehiculate and prepare the hardliners of the IRGC to assist at negotiations and engagement with the west. By the adoption of various rhetorical devices, techniques of positioning and exclusion of certain issues from the speech, he vehiculates a discourse that prepares the ground for engagement with the west.

Title: *What Iran Really Wants* ¹⁷²

Date: July 14, 2014

Author: Javad Zarif

“A WAY FORWARD

Excerpt 1:

“As an inevitable consequence of globalization and the ensuing rise of collective action and cooperative approaches, the idea of seeking or imposing zero-sum games has lost its luster. Still, some actors cling to their old habits and habitually pursue their own interests at the expense of others. The insistence of some major powers on playing zero-sum games with win-lose outcomes has usually led to lose-lose outcomes for all the players involved.”

[...]

“Willful cooperation has gradually developed as a new working pattern of interaction among states; it has come to replace the once predominant and now discredited pattern of confrontation, unconditional subservience, and perpetual rivalry.”

This text analyzed, was published in Foreign Affairs in July 2014. This text was given one year before the first deal (JPOA) that was brokered by the P5+1 countries and Iran. Therefore, it is a phase of transition and engagement between Iran and the world powers. In this text, the Iranian foreign minister justifies and addresses topics of power balance and approaches to foreign policy. We will see in the following excerpts how the discourse is vehiculated. The surface elements communicate that the new Iranian administration is willing to work and negotiate with the western countries, starting from the title. In this first excerpt we can see how Zarif positions “some actors” as unwilling to accept a new reality in international politics that cannot rely on zero-sum games.

Excerpt 2:

“Given the pressing challenges that it faces today, Iran will also focus on a number of more urgent aims. The top priority is to diffuse and ultimately defeat the international anti-Iranian campaign, spearheaded

by Israel and its American benefactors, who seek to "securitize" Iran - that is, to delegitimize the Islamic Republic by portraying it as a threat to the global order.

The main vehicle for this campaign is the "crisis" over Iran's peaceful nuclear program - a crisis that, in Iran's view, is wholly manufactured and therefore reversible. That is why Rouhani wasted no time in breaking the impasse and engaging in negotiations with the so-called P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus Germany) to find common ground and reach an agreement that will ensure nonproliferation, preserve Iran's scientific accomplishments, honor Iran's inalienable national rights under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, and end the unjust sanctions that have been imposed by outside powers."

In the second excerpt Zarif positions the Israeli and the U.S as the actors that are aiming to manipulate discourses to frame Iran as a threat. He, nevertheless, claims that the nuclear crisis is reversible, and positions his administration positively as the actor that started the commitment to initiate talks. He brings into the picture also sanctions and defines them as "unjust sanctions." In his text he also mentions that his government will spread the values of the Islamic Revolution and "support the cause of oppressed people across the world, especially in Palestine [...]" This intention to spread ideology may be at the center of the continued mistrust and enmity felt by parts of the American politicians and public. As we will see in the next section, where we will see how the nuclear deal and the Iranians were framed and addressed, by Mike Pompeo, the future Secretary of State and Benjamin Netanyahu at a speech in Congress.

Author: Mike Pompeo

Date: 2015

Title: A Pathway Forward: An Alternative to the Flawed Iran Nuclear Deal ¹⁷³

As mentioned earlier, from the beginning of the negotiation of the JCPOA with the Iranians, the Republicans, a part of the Democrats and allies in the middle east attacked the Obama administration for the deal that was crafted. Mike Pompeo, the main proponent of the maximum pressure strategy against the Iranians, criticized the deal from the onset, and gave talks on the deal and its undesirability for the U.S. since 2015 in the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. During the days when participation in the JCPOA was discussed, Mr. Pompeo gave a speech entitled "A Pathway Forward: An

Alternative to the Flawed Iran Nuclear Deal”. Also, the Israelis tried meticulously to put enormous pressure on Congress to reject the deal and to see it dead from start. They actively tried to link the participation of the U.S. in the JCPOA as a national security threat, as in their views, the Iranians will continue to pursue nuclear proliferation nevertheless and give them the chance to target the territories in Israel/occupied Palestine.

Before going into the analysis of this speech, it feels necessary to say a few words about the Heritage Foundation and its core ideological bases. It is a Conservative Think Tank, based in Washington D.C. and on their website, in the “About Heritage”, under the “Mission” section, via the words of the President of the foundation, we can read:

Excerpt 1:

“Heritage’s mission is to formulate and promote public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.”¹⁷⁴

Then *“In recent years, those principles have been under attack by the leftist ideologues running America’s elite institutions”*. Moreover, *“This agenda (of the Heritage n.d.r) proposes a return to our founding principles, trust in America’s unique constitutional culture, and **adherence to both scientific fact and moral truth.**”¹⁷⁵*

In the last line, we can see how the use of words is meant to create a discourse that aims to depoliticize issues by framing their point of view as rational and moral, to shield them from contestation. Therefore, every view that goes outside of their set framework, is ideological, non-scientific, and non-moral. This discursive strategy is important to underline as it highlights what claims are legitimate and rational and what claims are illegitimate and irrational. Now that we talked briefly about the ideological culture of the Heritage Foundation, we can delve deeply into the speech of Mike Pompeo.

Excerpt 2:

“The Obama Administration has argued that there is no alternative to the proposed nuclear agreement with Iran except war in the Middle East. This is simply not true. There are many better options between the flawed deal and war. What would no deal look like? What would happen If the U.S. strengthened the sanctions regime instead of disbanding it? How could we negotiate from a position of strength? What are the implications of the current verification process, and are there better alternatives?”

The surface elements communicate from the first instances that the nuclear deal is positioned as flawed from its onset. The topic that the text addresses and constructs is the nuclear deal, and how the participation in it is not beneficial for the United States as it is a nuclear agreement that “no American read”. Then the central discourse is developed to put the focus on certain “side-deals” also referred to as “secret deals”. The text mentions president Obama, ‘the ayatollahs’, John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, and the IAEA. These actors are represented by Pompeo as some kind of manipulators of the system that are trying to override review from the congress and are fearful of Pompeo. He positions himself as defender of American interests that are disregarded by the Obama’s administration. He mentions sanctions in his speech, and they appear to be presented as the hedge that the U.S. have against the Iranians that are wrongfully being lifted by the president. Then after his discourse of positioning the Americans that are working on the deal as inefficient, incapable of negotiating with the Iranians and complicit with their malicious activities, Pompeo goes to talk directly about the Iranians. He asserts that the U.S. should be focused on stopping Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability.

Excerpt 3:

“The only way to do that in my judgment is a regime change. The regime is intent upon building a nuclear weapon.” [...] “while Congress is contemplating this deal, the Iranian leaders said Israel will not exist in 25 years. These are the people who our President is demanding his party vote, to give up the capacity to constrain. We have to stop the nuclear parts. There are other tools available.”

Lastly in this excerpt Pompeo provides justifications for the only way to solve the dispute with the Iranians – regime change. Vehiculating in this way the message that there will be open hostility and inflexibility in dealing with the other, depicted in a monolithic way. He appeals to another actor, Israel,

to garner support for his confrontational approach. This may have been a signal to the Iranian elites and provided a justification to harbor more anti-American and anti-engagement sentiments in the country.

Title: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani address to United Nations ¹⁷⁶

Author: Hassan Rouhani

Date: 28 September 2015

Full text: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-rouhanis-2015-address-to-the-un-general-assembly/>

The speech was given by Mr. Rouhani at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 after an agreement was reached with the other parties. From the surface elements of this text, we can grasp and see the continuation of the new discourse of engagement with the west that is pushed by the new Iranian administration. We will analyze some excerpts from this speech to observe what language was used and how the new administration framed the issue of sanctions and nuclear deal.

Excerpt 1:

“Two years ago, the people of Iran in a competitive election, with their votes gave me a mandate for consolidating peace and constructive engagement with the worlds – whilst pursuing national rights, interests, and security. This *national will* manifested itself through a careful and clear *diplomatic effort* that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the six world powers that was immediately turned into an international instrument with the ratification of the United Nations Security Council. From the “standpoint of international law, this instrument sets a strong precedent where, for the first time, two sides rather than negotiating peace after war engaged in dialogue and understanding before the eruption of conflict.”

“The key point regarding the success of dialogues is the fact that any actor in the international system who pursues maximalist demands and does not allow space for the other side cannot speak of peace, stability, and development. As in commerce and economic activity, where the interests of both parties should be taken into account, in politics and international relations as well multilateralism and win-win solutions should be the basis of engagement.”

In this first excerpt Rouhani appeals to the ‘people of Iran’ and ‘competitive elections’ to bring legitimacy to the efforts of his government to engage with the world to solve the nuclear dispute. He proceeds to position the deal positively as a successful instrument that avoided war. The point is stressed on mutual assurance and mutual interests that are taken in consideration for the successful outcome of the deal. The argumentation after this initial positive frame, changes and goes to take in account the process that lead to the deal. We see in the next excerpt more in detail.

Excerpt 2:

“Though we protest the adoption of unfair resolutions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and the imposition of sanctions against the Iranian nation and government because of misunderstandings and sometimes overt hostilities of some countries, however, we believe, as an old Iranian saying goes, “the sooner you stop harm, the more benefit you will reap”. Today is the very day harm is stopped.

Security Council resolution 2231, despite some significant shortcomings, was an important development and the basis for terminating sanctions imposing resolutions against Iran. We consider as unfair the conduct of the Security Council in the past and insist that Iran, due to the important fatwa of its leader and its defense doctrine, has never had the intention to produce nuclear weapons and, therefore, sanctions resolutions against Iran were unjust and illegal.

Sanctions by the Security Council and unilateral sanctions by some countries were based on illusive and baseless allegations and created difficult conditions for our people. But these sanctions never affected the policy we adopted and the approach we took towards negotiations. We proved in these negotiations that there is nothing on Iran’s table other than logic, reason and ethics, and where necessary, legitimate, and decisive self-defense against any kind of aggression.”

In this last excerpt we see clearly how sanctions are positioned and what argumentation schemes are used. The events that led to the imposition of sanctions are referred to as ‘unjust’ and the processes that led to these resolutions are referred to as “misunderstandings and overt hostilities.” The social actor that is presented in this excerpt is the Security Council and it is referred to in a negative way for its adoption of unfair resolution that were supported by “baseless allegations.” He depicts the Iranian political elite in a positive way by describing the approach of the Iranian as based on “logic, reason and ethics.”

Nevertheless, he fails to mention events and cases where the Iranians were having a confrontational and avoidant approach to the nuclear dispute, that may have incremented mistrust from the western powers. His optimistic speech is a remarkable change from the discourse that was vehiculated in the past by other Iranian political elites, and it comes at a time with considerable changes in world politics. Nevertheless, this optimism was not shared by all the actors interested in Iranian nuclear research. We will see in the next session how Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, opposed vehemently the nuclear deal in a speech given at congress.

Title: Netanyahu Speech to Congress¹⁷⁷

Date: 3rd March 2015

Author: Benjamin Netanyahu

The Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu opposed vehemently the deal and warned that these kinds of negotiations are useless with the Iranians. Mr. Netanyahu claimed that the Iranians will nonetheless seek a nuclear bomb, and the only strategy to contain them is to do a preventive military strike on the nuclear facilities. On the 3rd of March 2015 he addressed Congress in a joint session, and on that occasion, he strongly opposed the deal and the discourse presented in the speech at congress focused on underlining the untrustworthiness of the Iranian regime. The main discourse presented in this speech revolves around underlining the untrustworthiness of the Iranian regime, presenting the negative traits of the deal, and the negative impact that it will have on the middle east. Although it is not surprising that the main arguments pushed forward by Netanyahu are hostile to any kind of dialogue with the Iranians, it is relevant to provide an analysis of the speech given at Congress. It is an important social and political actor speaking in a specific field of political action meant to form and influence opinions of U.S. legislators and public.

The importance of the stability of the relationship between the U.S and Israel is presented at first, and it is framed as a relationship that “is above politics and must always remain above politics”. The two countries are positioned by Netanyahu as part of one common destiny and community that is given a promised land that strives for freedom and hope. The only times when he mentions directly by name Obama is when he underlines how much he did to provide Israel with swift and unconditional support and for its ‘unwavering military aid.’ So, he starts with providing words of gratitude, the main topics surrounding nationalism, alliance and supportiveness between the two countries.

Then, after these opening lines, he goes to talk about the main issue at stake: Iran's quest for nuclear weapons and the danger that Iran poses to the survival of Israel. The discursive strategy that he uses here, is based on historical comparison. The people that live in Israel, and therefore Netanyahu as well, are descendants of those who inhabited that land in the middle east 4,000 years ago. His strategy of comparison then is to connect a case of 2,500 when a Persian ruler was plotting to destroy the Jewish people, but the plot was discovered and then foiled. He links that historical narrative comparing Khamenei with those ancient Persian rulers, referring that they have that same ancient hatred against the Jewish people. Then he compares the Iranian regime by saying that they are not a Jewish problem, just like the Nazis were not a Jewish problem. Therefore, threat perception is based on images of antisemitism, and on the nature of the regime of Iran. He asks what will happen when the Iranian regime that is dominated by "religious zealots who imposed on them (the people of Iran) a dark and brutal dictatorship" will obtain nuclear weapons.

To support his claims he gives reasons, by presenting cases where Iran conducts aggressive behaviors against Israel and U.S. positions in the middle east such as blowing up a mock U.S. aircraft carrier just the week before this talk, and he referred to the attacks against American troops and embassies, urging congress to stand together with the Israelis to stop "Iran's march of conquest, subjugation and terror."

He goes to position the Rouhani/Zarif government negatively, claiming that those who believe that they are charming and negotiations with them are possible, are only fooled by them, as their government "hangs gays, persecutes Christians, jails journalists and executes even more prisoners than before," and makes a comparison between ISIS and Iran, by claiming that they are motivated by the same ideology. So just because Iran is fighting ISIS does not make them worthy of trust as they are competing for hegemony over the same ideology. Netanyahu then underlines the danger that this regime could pose if they are let to possess nuclear weapons.

After this initial phase of the speech where we see use of comparison and negative positioning of Iran by creating the image of one monolithic regime motivated by one purpose, he moves to address directly the issue of the nuclear deal.

He asserts that the deal “will guarantee that Iran gets those weapons, lots of them.” He presents some arguments and reasons for his points. The main criticism is directed to two main concessions that Iran will obtain from this deal. One is that Iran will keep “a vast nuclear infrastructure, providing it with a short break-out time to the bomb.”

The second major concession is that “virtually all the restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program will automatically expire in about a decade.” Therefore, he pinpoints that it is important to think that Iran will have all the sanctions lifted and have their nuclear capabilities unrestricted. He infers that Iran would certainly then build a huge nuclear capacity and produce “many, many nuclear bombs.” He cites Iran's supreme leader, and says that his ambition is for Iran to have 190,000 centrifuges for enriching uranium. He cites Mr. Kerry referred to as “long-time friend”, saying that he confirmed that Iran “could legitimately possess massive centrifuges capacity when the deal expires.”

The issue of Iran’s Intercontinental Ballistic Missile program is also brought in the picture, and leaving this issue outside of the negotiations means then, that this nuclear arsenal that Iran will build, could reach any part of the earth “including every part of the United States.”

In talking about the motives for why this deal is being made, Netanyahu does not address directly those who are making the deal, but he refers to them as “anyone” and “they”. He asks “Why would anyone make this deal? Because they hope that Iran will change for the better in the coming years, or they believe that the alternative to this deal is worse?” He asserts that this deal would make them just more aggressive. He asks another question: “Would Iran be less aggressive when sanctions are removed, and its economy is stronger? If Iran is gobbling up four countries right now while it’s under sanctions, how many more countries will Iran devour when sanctions are lifted? Would Iran fund less terrorism when it has mountains of cash with which to fund more terrorism? Why should Iran’s radical regime change for the better when it can enjoy the best of both worlds: aggression abroad, prosperity at home?”

He replies to this question by saying that he knows that they will become even more aggressive and sponsor even more terrorism “when its economy is unshackled, and it’s been given a clear path to the bomb.” He argues that an arms race will take place then, and that possible nuclear confrontation in “the most dangerous part of the planet” would take place.

Again, he refers to Obama and the administration indirectly by referring to them as “anyone”. He says, “if anyone thinks - if anyone thinks, this deal kicks the can down the road, think again.” and says that before lifting the restrictions, the world should demand that Iran does three things. Stop its aggression against its neighbors, stop supporting terrorism, and stop threatening to annihilate Israel, “the one and only Jewish state.”

Change in behavior is deemed to be preliminary to lifting of restrictions, and that the Iranians are desperate for this deal, therefore the U.S should use their power, call their bluff if they threaten to walk from the table and keep up pressure. The deal is represented as a bad one, and no deal is seen as a better option. He rebuffed the claims that the alternative to a deal is war, by saying that the alternative is a much better deal that does not leave Iran with infrastructure and that does not give them an easy path to a bomb. He argues that there are two paths now. One path leads to acceptance of the deal and a nuclear armed Iran. Another one leads to a better deal that will prevent nuclear-armed Iran.

Lastly, he presents a social actor present in congress during his speech, Elie Wiesel, holocaust survivor. He links the issue of the negotiations to the JCPOA again to the persecution of Jews by the Nazis and argues that now Israel is powerful and capable of defending themselves in their ancient home, and “Even if Israel must stand alone, Israel will stand. But I know that Israel does not stand alone. I know that America stands with Israel. I know that you stand with Israel.” To conclude, he utilizes the figure of Moses that is depicted in the U.S congress, and he repeats the message that gave to the people of Israel before entering the land, “be strong and resolute, neither fear nor dread them. My friends may Israel and America always stand together, strong and resolute. May we neither fear nor dread the challenges ahead. May we face the future with confidence, strength and hope.”

In this last section he appeals to history, patriotism, unity, hope and strong leadership. He makes throughout his speech validity claims of truth and normative rightness regarding his position and the position of the United States in the arena. He positions himself and the U.S. positively and as beacons of light and freedom, whereas the Iranian antagonist is positioned negatively. In his speech various discourses intersect with one another. For instance, discourses on Islamist Militant political ideology, technological advancement, freedom, antisemitism, nuclear proliferation, economic sanctions, military confrontation in the region and the security of the state of Israel.

He provides throughout his speech reasons for his claims, nevertheless, while some concerns regarding the confrontational attitude of Iran in the middle east seem to be reasonable, others are fallacious as it is centered on depicting blame and negative connotations to the other without referring to what may be the motives of the other. Also, fallacious argumentation schemes are visible when he asserts that the deal will give a clear path to a nuclear bomb, without providing factual reasons for his beliefs. For instance, he quotes Iran's Supreme Leader regarding the issue of nuclear centrifuges and elaborates on that, while failing to reference the various instances when the leader declared in public speeches that Iran is not intentioned to pursue a nuclear bomb. Therefore, there is not much reference to previous discourses by the antagonist or by the Rouhani/Zarif government when he argues that they are camping on the same side of the radicals in Iran.

There are elements of ideological contradiction as while he asserts that he would like to strive for peace and prosperity for the Iranian people, he strongly opposes rapprochement measures and wants to rely on collective punishment to obtain a change of behavior. Moreover, there is the assumption that, even though they do not have access to the full text of the deal, it is a bad deal that will inevitably lead to the acceleration and "a clear path" to the bomb. The influence that this deal will have on the rapprochement with Iran and the possible outcomes and behavior of the antagonist are represented and discussed throughout the speech as negative and escalatory. The overall strategy of the discourse presented here is to discredit, raise awareness, underline untrustworthiness and the danger that is posed by Iran.

Then, we can see and understand more how the issue at stake became more central, more vital and more polarized at the time when the parties were engaging in negotiations and final talks that led to the acceptance of the deal. As we can grasp and understand from the speech given, the lawmakers, and the internal political audience were subject to this discourse, and we can understand that there are multiple layers that may have led them to the withdrawal from the United States from the deal.

Moreover, a member of the Republican party named Tom Cotton, sent an open letter addressed to the Iranian leaders, claiming that this deal would remain only under the presidency of Obama and that the next president could withdraw from the deal with a stroke of a pen. This letter was signed by 46 other Republican senators. This is what happened three years later under the presidency of Mr. Trump. It is important to underline that the JCPOA was not ratified as a treaty by the Senate. It was instead presented as an agreement. This point was highly divisive in the political debates in the U.S., as many Republicans

and some Democrats called the participation in this deal is inconsistent with the Constitution of the U.S. Notably, group of Republicans pushed the 2015 Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, a legislation that made it possible for Congress to vote on the Iran Nuclear Deal, but it was engineered in a way that gave members of congress the possibility to disapprove by voting and not by approving the deal.

Therefore, it was made in a way that made the case on whether congress wanted to reject the deal, and this arguably made it more difficult for the opponents of the deal to pass this bill, taking in consideration the political mechanization that are available in the U.S. legislative process.^[170]

Title: The Historical Deal that Will Prevent Iran from Acquiring a nuclear weapon¹⁷⁸

Author: Barack Obama

Date: January 16, 2016

This text was published on the website of the white house. Obama gave this speech on the implementation day of the JCPOA on the 16th of January. In this first excerpt Iran and IAEA are the social actors that are mentioned, and the JCPOA is referred to as the Iran deal. He proceeds to list the positive sides of the deal, by claiming that the breakout time is extended and the mechanisms that are put in place are functioning correctly. He provides details about the steps taken by Iran to arrive at the deal. Then there is a presentation of the technical aspects that justify the relevance and the concreteness of the deal to justify why the U.S. got into this deal. In the text Obama refers to only the nuclear issue and does not bring into the picture elements linked with Iranian foreign policy, but states that a part of the sanctions that were adopted by the U.S. will stay in place.

Excerpt 1:

“The International Atomic Energy Agency verified that Iran has completed the necessary steps under the Iran deal that will ensure Iran’s nuclear program is and remains exclusively peaceful.” “Before this agreement, Iran’s breakout time [...] was only two to three months. Today because of the Iran deal, it would take Iran 12 months or more. And with the unprecedented monitoring and access this deal puts in place, if Iran tries, we will know, and sanctions will snap back into place.”

[...]

“Since October Iran has: Shipped 25,000 pounds of enriched uranium out of the country.

- Dismantled and removed two-thirds of its centrifuges.*
- Removed the calandria from its heavy water reactor and filled it with concrete.*
- Provided **unprecedented** access to its nuclear facilities and supply chain.”*

“Because Iran has completed these steps, the U.S. and international community can begin the next phase under the JCPOA, which means the U.S. will begin lifting its nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. However, a number of U.S. sanctions authorities and designations will continue to remain in place.”

Then:

Excerpt(s) 2:

“The Iran Deal blocks the four pathways to a nuclear weapon.

Building a nuclear bomb requires either uranium or plutonium, but thanks to this deal, Iran’s four possible ways to leverage those fissile materials are blocked.”

[...]

“Here’s what Iran’s nuclear program would look like without this deal:

As it stands today, Iran has a large stockpile of enriched uranium and nearly 20,000 centrifuges, enough to create 8-10 bombs. If Iran decided to rush to make a bomb without the deal in place, it would take them 2 to 3 months until they had enough weapon-ready uranium to build their first nuclear weapon. Left unchecked, that stockpile and that number of centrifuges would grow exponentially practically guaranteeing that Iran could create a bomb – and create one quickly if it so chose.”

[...]

“Iran won’t garner any new sanctions relief until the IAEA confirms that Iran has followed through with its end of the deal. And should Iran violate any aspects of this deal, the UN, the U.S and the EU can snap the sanctions that have crippled Iran’s economy back into place.”

In this last excerpt we see how to support the claims that the deal made is instrumental to peace and security, the discourse is centered on vehiculating positive aspects of how the deal and will block any

path for a nuclear bomb. To do that he uses a rhetorical figure and presents a no-deal scenario where Iran would be able to develop a bomb in a short time span. With this deal as it is presented in the speech, the time would be more extended, and a monitoring system would keep control of Iranian activities.

Taking in consideration the relations with the two countries in this text we see how in the Obama's administration narrative, the Iranian issue was being reframed in a different tone respect of past administrations. The next text analyzed will be a speech given two years after implementation day, by Mike Pompeo after the U.S. decided to withdraw from the deal. Here the narrative changes drastically as we will see briefly.

Title: "After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy" ¹⁷⁹

Mike Pompeo, at the Heritage Foundation.

May 21, 2018

This was the first speech of Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State, and the fact that it was given at the Heritage Foundation is very interesting as it can talk so much about the ideological standpoints of the Trump Administration when conducting their foreign policy, and especially of relevance in this case, about their policy regarding Iran.

Excerpt 1:

*"President Trump withdrew from the deal for a simple reason: it failed to guarantee the safety of the American people from the risk created by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. No more. No more wealth creation for **Iranian kleptocrats**. No more acceptance of missiles landing in Riyadh and in the Golan Heights. **No more cost-free expansions of Iranian power.** No more."*

In this excerpt, we see how the narrative presented in the first lines does not mention nuclear weapons or non-compliance on the part of the Iranians to the deal in the present moment. The issue is framed as being part of a bigger confrontation then on a specific issue. The Iranians are positioned negatively and he defines them as kleptocrats and war mongers that aim to expand their power. They are expanding their

power then at the expenses of the Americans. The argument is based on linking Iranian power expansion on the nuclear deal.

Then we read:

Excerpt 2:

*“The **weak** sunset provisions of the JCPOA merely delayed the inevitable nuclear weapons capability of the Iranian regime. After the countdown clock ran out on the deal’s sunset provisions, Iran would be free for a quick sprint to the bomb, setting off a potentially catastrophic arms race in the region. Indeed, the very brevity of the delay in the Iranian nuclear program itself incentivized Middle Eastern proliferation.”*

*“Iran entered the JCPOA in **bad faith**. It is worth noting that even today, the regime continues to lie. Just last month, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif told a Sunday morning news show, “We never wanted to produce a bomb.”*

*“The JCPOA had additional shortcomings as well. The mechanisms for inspecting and verifying Iran’s compliance with the deal **were simply not strong enough**. The deal did nothing to address Iran’s continuing development of ballistic and cruise missiles, which could deliver nuclear warheads.”*

In this excerpt, we can see that the topic is the JCPOA and its inspection mechanisms. Pompeo criticizes the deal and asserts that the verifying mechanisms “were simply not strong enough” without going to underline or explain how these mechanisms are determinantal in the present moment regarding the issues of nuclear development in Iran. Instead, he refers to Iran’s development of ballistic and cruise missiles, emphasizing that they could deliver nuclear warheads. This discursive strategy of linking two separate issues is a way of providing objective argumentation on rational and moral grounds for the assertion that Iran poses a threat to the U.S. It is an appeal to collective fears. The dominant discursive strategy then is linking the issue of the nuclear deal with Iranian ‘malign activities’ in the middle-east, and focusing on presenting the Iranians as well intentioned to develop nuclear warheads.

In excerpt 3 he provides more support to his argumentation that the JCPOA is linked with Iranian expansion.

Excerpt 3:

*“Remember: Iran advanced its march across the Middle East during the JCPOA. Qasem Soleimani has been playing with house money that has become blood money. **Wealth created by the West** has fueled his campaigns.”*

*“Strategically the Obama administration made a bet that the deal would spur Iran to stop its rogue state actions and conform to international norms. That bet was a loser with massive repercussions for **all** of the people living in the Middle East.”*

Then Pompeo goes to cite Kerry when he says “I know the Middle East that is on fire ... is going to be more manageable with this deal” end of quote. “Query whether the Middle East is more manageable today than it was when they embarked on the JCPOA. Lebanon is an even more comfortable home for Hizballah today than it was when we embarked on the JCPOA. Hizballah is now armed to the teeth by Iran and has its sights set on Israel.”

Excerpt 4:

*“Here in the West, President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif are often held apart from the regime’s unwise terrorist and malign behavior. They are treated somehow differently. The West says, ‘Boy, if only they could control Ayatollah Khamenei and Qasem Soleimani then things would be great.’ Yet Rouhani and Zarif are your elected leaders. **Are they not the most responsible for your economic struggles?** Are these two not responsible for wasting Iranian lives throughout the Middle East?”*

Then Mr. Pompeo presents the list of demands that the new U.S. administration wants complete compliance from Iran.

“First, we will apply unprecedented financial pressure on the Iranian regime. The leaders in Tehran will have no doubt about our seriousness. Thanks to our colleagues at the Department of Treasury, sanctions are going back in full effect and new ones are coming. Last week we imposed sanctions on the head of Iran’s central bank and other entities that were funneling money to the IRGC Qods Force. They were

also providing money to Hizballah and other terrorist organizations. The Iranian regime should know that this is just the beginning.”

Then:

“The sting of sanctions will be painful if the regime does not change its course from the unacceptable and unproductive path it has chosen to one that rejoins the League of Nations. These will indeed end up being the strongest sanctions in history when we are complete. The regime has been fighting all over the Middle East for years. After our sanctions come in force, it will be battling to keep its economy alive.”

Then:

*“Third, we will also advocate tirelessly for the Iranian people. **The regime must improve how it treats its citizens.** It must protect the human rights of every Iranian. It must cease wasting Iran’s wealth abroad.”*

“The Iranian economy is struggling as a result of bad Iranian decisions.”

Here the speaker positions again the guilt on the Iranian counterpart for its own economic malaise. It is not the imposition of sanctions by the U.S and their withdrawal from the deal to be responsible for the economic struggle. It is their actions that led to this situation. This transfer of responsibility is a powerful strategy as it goes to put the focus on the adversarial moves.

Excerpt 5:

“We’re open to new steps not only with our allies and partners but with Iran as well. But only if Iran is willing to make major changes. As President Trump said two weeks ago, he is ready, willing, and able to negotiate a new deal. But the deal is not the objective. Our goal is to protect the American people.”

“Any new agreement will make sure Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon and will deter the regime’s malign behavior in a way that the JCPOA never could. We will not repeat the mistakes of past administrations, and we will not renegotiate the JCPOA itself. The Iranian wave of destruction in the

region in just the last few years is proof that Iran's nuclear aspirations cannot be separated from the overall security picture."

In this last excerpt the speaker opens the door for possible negotiations but by setting specific red lines. The redlines are connected again with negative positioning of the Iranians and the use of the term destructive goes to provide a malign image of the other. The demands are always linked with menaces of violence and punishment.

Title: Iranian response¹⁸⁰

Author: Hassan Rouhani

Date: May 8, 2018

Hassan Rouhani, after the withdrawal from the nuclear deal, gave a speech that is accessible on Youtube where he condemned the move of the U.S. The speech was televised live in the United States on the CBSN channel.

The speech given in this account appears to be different from the speech given at the U.N. on the occasion of the acceptance and entry in the JCPOA. The text discusses extensively the United States decision to withdraw from the JCPOA, emphasizing the lack of commitment to international agreements by the United States. Rouhani reinforces this positioning by referring to the Paris Climate Deal, and trade agreements as other examples that go to confirm that the U.S and Trump are untrustworthy. The text nevertheless, does not discuss extensively about specific details of the deal, and the perceived motives behind this decision. The primary social actors addressed are the United States, Iran, the international community - P5+1, the IAEA, the people of Iran, MENA region countries.

Rouhani starts by citing historical events to underline that in the past U.S adopted confrontational and hostile attitudes toward the country. He positions Iran as a country that "adheres to its commitments", by referring to "what was said 40 years ago", leaving a degree of vagueness around this historical citation. When referring to the historical events undertaken by the U.S he is more detailed and brings in instances by referring to the coup of Mossadegh, the targeting of an Iranian passenger aircraft and measures carried against people in the Middle East and "other parts of the world".

Excerpt 1:

“Tonight, the Americans announced that they have withdrawn from the JCPOA, and in fact, it was an emphasis of what they have been doing in the past months. So, since the signing of the nuclear deal till today, when has the United States ever adhered to its commitments? just a few statements have been released. so, has there been any action to the benefit of the Iranian people? or, have the Americans acted in accordance with the nuclear deal and its framework?

[..]

Based on what has been said by the IAEA, the Iranian nation has adhered to its commitments, and the Iranian government has fulfilled all its commitments beseeched by the JCPOA. But today we can clearly see which country is not respecting international commitments. The JCPOA was not an agreement between Iran and the United States so that the U.S. would be able to just exit the deal. JCPOA has been a multilateral, international agreement endorsed by the U.N. Security Council and also Resolution 2231. therefore, the United States officially announced tonight that it pays no attention to international agreements.”

“And tonight, from one point of view, I’m so sorry for the fact that the United States, they are suffering from rulers such as Trump who is disgracing them. I am also pleased that this nuisance has been eliminated from the JCPOA. The troublesome member has been eliminated, and I will also very soon attend a press conference to speak with the people

In this first excerpt Rouhani starts by introducing the main issue at stake, the withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA. Then proceeds to position the U.S. negatively by claiming that the Americans do not respect their engagements. He appeals to the IAEA as a reliable actor to support the claim that the Iranians were respecting the deal and stresses the multilateral nature of the deal that was brokered. In this way he goes to frame the discourse by framing the U.S. as the outsider country, an image that is typically attributed to the Iranians.

Excerpt 2:

“From tonight, the Iranian people will become more determined and become more united, and, in fact, what Trump did was psychological warfare and economic pressure. We will not allow Trump to triumph in exerting economic pressure on the Iranian people. We will not let him triumph. History shows that our people have always been victorious in the face of conspiracies, and we will also emerge victorious at this juncture.”

“I have also ordered the Atomic Energy Organization to be fully prepared for subsequent measures if needed, so in the case of need we will start up our industrial uranium enrichment without limitations. So, till that time to adopt that decision we will wait for a few weeks, and those who signed this deal, we will consult with them. Everything depends on our national interests. If our interests are met within the JCPOA, we will continue this trend. And if JCPOA turns into a piece of paper without guaranteeing our nation’s interests, then there will be a clear path ahead of us. I assure the people of Iran that, since several months ago, the government has made the necessary plan for all the conditions, and we will have no serious problems. We will overcome this issue through unity and coordination and steadfastness, and our people will have no problem with their daily life in the upcoming weeks, months and years to come.”

In the last excerpt Rouhani goes to appeal to national unity and resolution. He asserts that this event will harden the Iranian society towards the U.S. and toward the subsequent moves that will be taken by the Americans. Nevertheless, he fails to appeal to the motives that may have led the U.S. to withdraw from the deal, by pointing the attention only the Iranian compliance with the terms of the deal. In this way, he portrays the role of the Iranians of innocent victims of the Trump administration that is doing these moves as part of a larger anti-Iranian scheme. He then constructs a monolithic ‘we’ that is the Iranian people that are rallying around the flag.

Conclusions:

From the texts and excerpts analyzed, we can see how language and ideology shaped the perception of the actors and the effectiveness of sanctions as an influence tool. From this first analysis, we can conclude that when sanctions are used and adopted, how they are framed is relevant and it is a variable that influences the outcome. We can infer this conclusion by looking at the difference in rhetoric between the Obama administration and the Trump administration. We also saw how discourse and ideology vehiculated through texts and speeches in also influential in shaping the effectiveness of economic sanctions as an influence tool. When using this tool, it is important to have clear the purpose of their use. Are they used as a negotiating tool, or are they used as an alternative to war and a punitive measure meant to change behavior and obtain compliance?

Therefore, in line with the psycho-social approach outlined in the theoretical framework, we can claim that the propositions can be reliable when trying to make sense of the chaotic nature of international relations. We can infer by integrating different approaches to study economic sanctions, that rational calculations are not extensively apt to analyze the issues at stake in international politics. Integrating the parsimonious research developed in separate fields seem to be a proper strategy in a fast-paced world with multiple levels of interactions. Studying a case from one angle leads to non-conclusionary results that struggle to be reconciled with the real-life examples. This is not to say that the present study is presenting a conclusionary result on economic sanctions in the case of the U.S. and Iran, don't get me wrong. It is a first attempt to reconcile different research traditions to develop a more comprehensive framework to analyze the interaction between different techniques of statecraft that states use to influence another actor in the international arena. We can say that by looking at economic techniques of statecraft in synchronicity with propaganda and diplomacy we can have a clearer vision on how an influence attempt unfolds. The process in this way becomes clearer and more light is shed also on how an outcome is attained.

This approach has willingly an anti-rationalistic stance in the sense that actors are not pre-supposed to be able calculators of risks that aim to maximize their interest. Rather collective fears, misperception and ideology are extremely relevant to understand the moves of the actors in the international arena.

The U.S. administration after the withdrawal from the JCPOA faces a new challenge, which is being able to bring to the table the Iranians and the European allies to restore or maybe even define a new deal regarding the nuclear activity of Iran, and possibly other pressing issues. It is a difficult task, and it is easier to discuss and write about it than to bring concrete results. According to Vali Nasr as of 2021, Iran's priority was a return to the pre-Trump status quo. The Iranians want to see the new sanctions imposed by the Trump administration revoked, such as the block of Iranian oil sales and access to the international financial system. These sanctions hardened and made all these diplomatic efforts that we discussed empty in the eyes of many Iranians and ultimately gave more strength to the hardliners in Iran that obtained the election in 2019. Of course, a nuclear deal will not resolve the problems in the West Asian arena, but it will for sure embolden the rapprochement between Iran and the West, and arguably give more credibility to the reformist camp in Iran, that is willing to engage with the west.

U.S.- Iran relations are in desperate need of a pragmatic mode of conducting inter-state affairs. The distance between the two parties today grew further and the ruling hard-liners repeatedly attacked and opposed Rouhani's policies and the nuclear deal, claiming that diplomatic efforts with Westerners are useless since they only want to destroy the Iranian leadership and accomplish regime change ^[173]. The example of the policy used by Trump against Iran gave hard-liners credit in front of the Iranian people – who did not have had the chance to enjoy the concessions that were made to Iran when the country entered the 2015 nuclear deal.

If we look at the proposed aims of the Maximum pressure campaign it is difficult to maintain that this policy accomplished its goal for the time being. It is argued that this confrontational strategy made Iran even more aggressive and promoted what in Iran is called a “Resistance Economy” emboldening, even more, the hardliners that won the elections held in 2021.^[171]

After the withdrawal of the U.S, the Iranian leaders decided in May 2019 to restore their uranium enrichment program.^[172] Although they continue to claim that this is made solely for civil purposes and no nuclear weapon is sought. Moreover, the Iranians now tightened more their ties with Russia and China. Russia and Iran, as the two countries that are facing the stingiest sanctions regimes in the world, now are closer in military, economic and political grounds that they ever been. The path ahead is

tortuous, and there is the need to develop new multilateral instruments and ways to transform conflicts. For the time being researchers and practitioners must observe and analyze reality in an eclectic fashion in a fast paced and rapidly changing world.

APPENDIX

ID	Publication date	Name o	Type	Author	Title	Size	Position
	February 22, 2012		Speech	Ali Khamenei	Supreme Leader's Speech to Nuclear Scientists.		P. 48
	<i>July 2012</i>		Text	Barack Obama, White House Staff	Fact Sheet Sanctions Related to Iran		P. 50
	September 17, 2013		Speech	Ali Khamenei	Leader's Speech in Meeting with Commanders of		P. 52

					Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps		
	July 14, 2014		Text	Javad Zarif	What Iran Really Wants		P. 55
	March 3, 2015		Speech	Benjamin Netanyahu	Netanyahu Speech to Congress		P. 62
	September 9, 2015		Speech	Mike Pompeo	A Pathway Forward: An Alternative to the Flawed Iran Nuclear Deal		P. 56
	September 28, 2015		Speech	Hassan Rouhani	Iranian President Hassan Rouhani address to UN		P. 59
	January 16, 2016		Speech	Barack Obama	The Historical Deal that Will Prevent Iran from Acquiring a Nuclear Weapon		P. 67
	May 21, 2018		Speech	Mike Pompeo	After the Deal: A New Iran Strategy		P. 69
	May 8, 2018		Speech	Hassan Rouhani	Iranian President Slams Trump's decision to exit nuclea deal.		P. 73

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