

**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENABLERS AND CONSTRAINTS ON PRESIDENTIAL  
LEADERSHIP: THE MAKING OF BARACK OBAMA'S POLICY ON IRAN**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University*

*for award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2019**



July 12<sup>th</sup> 2019

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis entitled “**Internal and External Enablers and Constraints on Presidential Leadership: The Making of Barack Obama’s Policy on Iran**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university .

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**CERTIFICATE**

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*Dedicated to,*

*My parents, Mary Anne Patricia Nazareth and Trevor Anthony Nazareth*

*who have always believed, supported and encouraged me.*

## *Acknowledgements*

*I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Saumyjit Ray, for his guidance throughout my M.Phil and Ph.D. His interest in American politics, both domestic and foreign, were an enriching experience.*

*As a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellow, I would like to profusely thank the United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF). They made my dream come true by awarding me the Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellowship (2017-2018). It gave me the opportunity to further my understanding on U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Being in the US gave me access to material as well as valuable inputs by professors and the general public. For this US based phase of my research, I would like to thank the following people and institutions. Assistant Professor Jordan Tama, my supervisor at the American University, for his constructive and valuable input that has helped me sharpen not only my research but the manner in which I think. Professor Emeritus James Thurber who enhanced my understanding of U.S. politics. The Library Staff at the American University for taking the time in helping me access the required information. And my Fulbright D.C. family for the wonderful events and get-togethers that were truly enriching.*

*I would like to thank Dr Priti Singh, Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra, Prof. K.P. Vijayalakshmi, Prof. Abdul Nafey Prof Christopher Raj and Assistant Prof. Deepa Kansra for the knowledge they have imparted. I am especially grateful to Prof. Christopher Raj and Prof. Abdul Nafe for their recommendations for the Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship.*

*Throughout my time at the Centre, the office staff have been very cooperative and I gratefully acknowledge their help.*

*My deep gratitude goes out to Ms Kavita Myles for her motivation, guidance, advice, support and encouragement throughout the duration of my thesis.*

*I acknowledge with thanks the team at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, especially Chairman Gautam Subarwal and Ruhee Neog the Director of the Institute. They granting me the opportunity to write and enhance my knowledge and understanding.*

*To my family and friends who have accompanied me on this journey and who have always been there for me, I thank you all .*

*Last but not least, I am grateful to Holy Trinity for being by my side through this journey and imparting the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and perseverance .*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIPAC	Arab-Israel Public Affairs Committee
AUMF	Authorization of Use of Force
CHRG	Congressional Hearings
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
EU	European Union
EO	Executive Order
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GOP	Grand Old Party (commonly called the Republican Party)
H.R.	House Resolution
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Council
IRPSA	Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act
JFK	John F. Kennedy
JPA	Joint Plan of Action
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JCS	Joint Chief's of Staff
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson
LEU	Low Enriched Uranium
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFU	No First Use



NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
P5+1	Five Permanent Members of the Security Council - U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany
QME	Qualitative Military Edge
TRR	Teheran Research Reactor
S.Res	Senate Resolution
SWIFT	Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VOICE	Victims of Iranian Censorship (VOICE) Act
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

#### **ABBREVIATIONS AND STATE NAMES**

AK	Arkansas
AL	Alabama
AZ	Arizona
CA	California
FL	Florida
ID	Idaho
IL	Illinois
IN	Indiana
KY	Kentucky
MI	Michigan
MA	Massachusetts
MD	Maryland

ME	Maine
MS	Mississippi
NC	North Carolina
NJ	New Jersey
NV	Nevada
NY	New York
OH	Ohio
PA	Pennsylvania
SC	South Carolina
SD	South Dakota
TN	Tennessee
TX	Texas
VA	Virginia

## Preface

Presidential leadership is a critical component in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. The manner in which the chief executive wields power has an impact on his success or failure of the strategy. The role of actors such as the president, his advisors Congress as well as international actors have a major impact on the leadership process and the manner in which the president is able to engage and convinced members of the administration, Congress and the international allies of his policies. Therefore, understanding foreign policy entails understanding the roles of these actors.

Barack Obama's election campaign focused a 'change' in manner in which foreign policy was viewed as well as in the making of foreign policy. Therefore, the basis behind this research is to understand the ways in which Obama tried to achieve this. In matters relating to foreign policy and specifically with Iran, he focused on changing the direction of the war on terror and focusing on building and strengthening alliances; the latter meant both in Europe as well as Asia. As part of working with allies, he promised engagement with countries who were not friendly towards the U.S.; this especially meant Iran. In his policy towards Iran, Obama had to address a number of factors that included U.S. strategy in the region and dealing with traditional allies who have a flair for not always backing the U.S., that is Israel and Saudi Arabia. These allies were wary of Obama's policy toward Iran from the onset of his Administration. The rise and spread of Islamic terrorism in countries such as Iraq and Syria have brought Iran into the fold. Therefore, Obama's policy toward Iran is multi-faceted. The internal factors within both the governments have played a dual role of constraining and enabling the policy. This research, through the lens of presidential leadership in foreign policy looks at Obama's policy toward Iran encompassing the internal and external constraints and enablers

The first chapter provides an in-depth as well as a historical analysis of the role the president, his advisors, and Congress play. It also provides an understanding of the leadership styles the President uses in an effort to guide policy. The role of the president's

advisors situated in the White House also plays a crucial role as most president's do not always lean on formalized processes but more of informal processes, these processes are often dynamic and change with the situation.

The second chapter deals with a historical analysis the US relations with Iran through successive administrations from Eisenhower to George W. Bush and the role played by the President and his advisors. It also includes the manner in which internal and external dynamics were able to shape policy. The third chapter explores President Obama's strategy towards Iran and his persistence to get an agreement on the table. It delves into the relations the advisors had with the president and the manner in which they helped shape U.S. policy.

The last two chapters evaluate the internal as well as the external factors that created avenues as well as impediments to Obama's leadership. The internal factors include Congress, public opinion as well as members of his Administration in his rapprochement with Iran. External factors include the international allies, both P5+1 as well as the Middle East.

Therefore the basic idea of the research to analyze (through the lens of presidential leadership), the ability of President Barack Obama to bring together international as well as domestic coalitions in his strategy towards Iran. The panoramic factors that pertain to the making of foreign policy in the U.S.; internal and external elements that either enable or constrain presidential leadership. The quest of the thesis is to discern three aspects whether Obama displayed a pre-eminence in the making of foreign policy in his strategy towards Iran. The second aspect deals with the role that Congress played during the Obama presidency. The main intention is whether and to what extent was Congress was assertive, deferential or acquiesced to the president. The third aspect, addresses the role of international allies and the impact they had on the president's policies.

## **Introduction**

### **The President and the Shaping of U.S. foreign Policy**

*“The presidency has made every man who occupied it , no matter how small, bigger than he was; and no matter how big, not big enough for its demands”.*

*- Lyndon Baines Johnson, 36th President of  
the United States of America*

On July 14th 2015, the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany commonly called the P5+1 were able to reach a deal with Iran regarding its nuclear program. This was a historic agreement as it was the first time since the Islamic Revolution that U.S. leadership were successful in reaching across to the Iranians with unclenched fists. The leadership exhibited by President Obama motivated this piece of research on the factors that shape presidential leadership in the making of foreign policy.

The presidency is by far the greatest and the most powerful position to be held in the United States. In *The President's Club* (2012) Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy have defined the presidency as one of the most elite and exclusive clubs as membership extends till date to only 45 people. The U.S. Constitution provides the basis of presidential power, stated in Article II. Over time, this power has expanded to a large extent surpassing the intentions and vision of the Framers including Hamilton.

From the inception of the 13 colonies to the formation of the Republic, the debate over a strong executive troubled the Founders. This fear continues to persist especially in foreign affairs. Over the years, the presidential powers in foreign policy have expanded as a result of the internal as well as the external environment and especially as a result of the men that occupied the office. Their willingness to wield power or lack thereof has shaped the presidency. In the course of history, there have been president's who were considered weak and who were apprehensive as well as ambivalent to use the powers of the office, while, there have been others who have overused these powers.

Over time the presidency not only assumed a far greater position in the American Democratic system but around the world as well. The president is often considered the face of American democracy as well as is bestowed with titles such as *Leader of the Free World*. The modern presidency epitomized by communication. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) through his fireside chats was able to communicate with the American public on a regular basis. This was taken a step further by Kennedys's personal touch in the form of his regular press conferences, it brought the presidency within close reach of the American people. The modern presidency was shaped by the intertwining of

constitutional powers as well as evolutionary powers together with dynamic personalities. The contemporary presidency was shaped by the post-9/11 phase, wherein presidents have exuded the enumerated powers, together with their personalities, as well as the domestic and international environment.

The predominant position acquired by the president in foreign affairs was a precedent set by Washington. George Washington was acutely aware that the manner in which he conducted himself in office would set a precedence. For Washington, the president was the head of a sovereign nation and state governments and their executives were subordinate. When the war of 1793 broke out between France and Britain, the powers of the presidency and the manner in which they were wielded were put to the test as Washington unilaterally declared America's neutrality. This declaration deepened the schism among the founding fathers as to whether Washington had the authority. The division mainly existed between James Madison and Thomas Jefferson (on one side) against Alexander Hamilton (on the other). Hamilton like Washington supported a strong executive as well as supported the declaration of Neutrality. Hamilton position lay in his support of the president's power to make such a proclamation under the executive power stated in Article II of the Constitution (Frisch 2007).

During the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War created a constitutional crisis, one in which President Lincoln was forced to act quickly and decisively as the fate of the union was at stake. This was also a time wherein the three branches of government were rolled up into one. On April 19 1861, President Lincoln authorized a blockade of the Southern ports. However, in accordance with international law this was considered as a declaration of war which was the domain of Congress as per the Article I of the Constitution. Later, in the aftermath of the firing on Fort Sumter (April 27th 1861), Lincoln suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*. Thus, the executive branch expanded its powers, to deal with an ongoing crisis. Finally, on July 4th, 1861 Lincoln provided his constitutional argument for his actions and stated his actions were a public necessity and trusted that Congress would readily ratify them. The justification for Lincoln was that

none of the actions taken went beyond the constitutional competency of Congress. In calling up the militia, deploying the military and imposing the blockade were actions within the bounds of the constitution. He also expanded the regular military with congressional approval. For all of Lincoln's actions the Congress supported him albeit after the fact, thus supplying some significant constitutional approval (Schlesinger 1988, Paludan 2007).

The role of the president in foreign affairs was aggrandized with the expansion of the U.S. in world affairs. This was specifically seen under the leadership of James Monroe. In his address to congress (1823), Monroe proclaimed U.S. goals in the Western Hemisphere. For Monroe, the aim was to put an end to the colonization of France and the Holy Alliance in South America. He also stated that the U.S. would resist involvement in European affairs (Hart 2005). The Monroe Doctrine emerged as a response to the political and external environment in Europe at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. For the most part, Europeans did not express a great deal of interest in the Doctrine, European leaders like Metternich of Austria and Czar Alexander I of Russia saw this move as "arrogant". The U.S. for its part lacked the military power to enforce it and thus enforcement of the doctrine was left unto the Royal British Navy. At first, Americans displayed a great deal of interest but this subsided overtime. The Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral presidential statement that committed the U.S. to do very little while simultaneously defending its own national security interests (Gilderhus 2006). The doctrine displayed the power of the president in foreign affairs that led to framing U.S. policy towards Latin America as well as Europe. In doing so Monroe displayed that it was the president and not congress that made foreign policy (Dulles 1916) .

Woodrow Wilson saw the presidency in terms of an "initiative in foreign affairs, which the President possesses without any restriction". This meant that the president had "virtually the power to control [foreign relations] absolutely." He believed that "the president was at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can." (Monaghan 1993). Wilson played an important role in matters pertaining to foreign



policy however he was undercut by the prevailing sentiments as well as Congress (Turner 1951).

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the U.S. maintained its neutrality. The debate within the U.S. vacillated between neutrality and which side to join. Wilson fashioned a postwar world order one based on collective security with the U.S. playing a major role. The sinking of the *RMS Lusitania*, that killed about 128 Americans furnished Wilson's opportunity to declare war on the Central Powers. As the clouds of war were drawing close, Congress voted and passed a resolution that favored U.S. entry in World War I. The resolution passed the senate - 82-6 and 373-50 in the House. In 1918, an armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 between the allied and central powers that brought the Great War to an end. This paved the way for the Paris Peace Conference, wherein Wilson played a pertinent role (Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin 2014).

Wilson envisioned a greater role played by U.S. in maintaining peace. The Fourteen Points were to become the standard bearer in creating long lasting international peace, one of the components was the setting up of the League of Nations. Many scholars have praised or condemned Wilson's leadership during the Conference as well as questioned his statecraft in drafting the League's Covenant. For Wilson, the League represented a new world order one in which the system of alliances would be replaced by American leadership (under the League). But at the same time he reconciled with the traditional American rejection of entangling alliances. For Wilson, there was a belief that the U.S. would provide global leadership and fulfill its "God-given destiny". Unfortunately, the Republicans did not share the similar belief. Under the leadership of Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), the Senate challenged Wilson's vision for the world as well as for the U.S. The Senate exerted its power and Wilson was forced to acquiescence his leadership role (Ambrosius 2006).

FDR presided over the presidency at a time of great economic strife as well as global turmoil. He brought new meaning to the presidency and the leadership role he played. As president, he not only expanded the powers of the presidency in foreign affairs

but in domestic affairs as well. As a result of the Great Depression, FDR set the ground running from the very beginning in an effort to bring an end to national crisis that had reached global proportions. The power of the presidency not only resided in the Constitution but in the office, the person who acquired the office and the willingness to use that power. Roosevelt extended the powers of his office, his policies were also bold and dynamic and together with Congress ably passed a record number of bills in his first hundred days. These pieces of legislation included the Public Utilities Holding Company Act, the Wagner Labor Relations Act, the Social Security Act, and the Wealth Tax Act . In foreign affairs,Roosevelt put forth the ‘good neighbor policy’,this was an effort to reconcile promises with deeds through political ,economic, and cultural policies (Stuart 1942).

Prior to the U.S. entry in World War II, the Congress enforced the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936,1937, 1938 and 1939. Roosevelt skillfully managed to circumvent the cash and carry as well as lend lease acts by enforcing the commander-in-chief clause. It was one of the few times a president exerted power in the domestic as wells in foreign policy. Pearl Harbor drew the U.S. directly into the war and granted the president unbridled powers as a result of the rally effect. During the war, the president was also geared towards the peace process and the role of the U.S. in this process in the same manner that President Wilson had done after World War I. Roosevelt was committed to the idea of collective security that on the sidelines of the Tehran Conference (1943) FDR met with Stalin and assured him of postwar cooperation as well as the setting up of an international organization that would replace military threats. It was at Dumbarton Oaks, that the UN was formed by the big four. Later, during the conference at Yalta, the agreements inked between the ‘Big Three’ eventually set the stage for the formation of the UN especially in terms of voting were executive agreements. Therefore these agreements did not require congressional approval. Thus, once again FDR used his inherent powers to circumnavigate congress.

The power exerted by the president was seen in *US vs Curtis Wright*. Wherein Congress had authorized the president to place embargoes on South America countries that were part of the Chaco War. When Curtiss-Wright was indicted for the sale of arms to South America it was overlooked by the president, the Supreme Court stated that foreign policy was the domain of the president (McCormick 1998).

When it came to dealing with prisoners of war or even suspected threats by particular communities from within the U.S., the Courts acquiesced to the president as the courts were stacked in favor of FDR. In *Yakus v. United States* (1944) the justices upheld the wage and price controls. The Court also sanctioned Roosevelt's use of a military tribunal to try eight Germans who came to America to commit acts of sabotage. The Court's most controversial decision during World War II was *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), in which a majority of justices condoned the Roosevelt administration's use of racial classification to imprison many Japanese Americans however through Executive order the president was able to set up relocation camps for hundreds of Americans of Japanese decent (Milkins and Nelson 2016).

The presidency of FDR is considered a transformational one as, the executive branch became an initiator of policy through his leadership as well as a spokesperson for national interest.

The presidency post 1945 changed, with the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War propelled the president into a position of leadership that had never been seen before. As mentioned earlier the president's position in matters pertaining to foreign policy were immense given the broad contours of the Constitution as well as the powers the president gained . The Cold War signaled a time of presidential pre-eminence to a great extent that Arthur Schlesinger termed it as the *Imperial Presidency* and later President Gerald Ford termed it the *Imperiled Presidency* (Hunter 1978 ).

During the Cold War, there were cycles of imperial presidency and cycles of an imperiled presidency. The imperial presidency was born out of an absolute focus on foreign affairs, that gave presidents absolute control with little or no recriminations. The imperial presidency was an extension of the presidents powers in matters pertaining to foreign affairs. The imperial presidency was rooted in the the presidency of FDR and became far more pronounced during the Truman and successive administrations. The imperial presidency was not only presidential assertiveness but congressional acquiescence. But the extent a president was imperial depended on the manner in which he wielded his powers.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the consensus among the Republicans in Congress aimed at reining in America's role in world, the isolationists were led by Henry Cabot Lodge. President Truman was warned by Winston Churchill of the spread of communism throughout Europe. Therefore, Truman with the support of Senator Arthur Vandenberg were able to ensure U.S. involvement around the world through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall plan. These policies were aimed at providing aid to countries battling subversion. These policies were the basis of U.S. involvement during the Cold War. In addition, there was an overhaul in the national security decision making apparatus as a result of the National Security Act 1947. This created the National Security Council, the Department of Defense that joined the armed forces and lastly one of the most used tools by presidents during the Cold War - the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Thus the Act, further centralized the decision making process (Edwards 1968).

Though Truman was successful in passing foreign policy agenda his ability o provide leadership in terms of domestic policy, the Fair Deal was met with greater opposition from the Republican Congress that compelled Truman to call the 80th Congress the "*the Do Nothing Good for Nothing 80th Congress*".

During the Kennedy administration, in spite of the initial setback as a result of the Bay of Pigs fiasco as well as his failure to assert U.S. power at the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev, it was the Cuban Missile crisis that redeemed the administration. In dealing

with the Crisis, Kennedy was able to assert his role in foreign policy making through the EXCOMM. In addition to this, he was able to keep congressional interference to a minimum. The Thirteen Days of October, were by far the most crucial to Kennedy's leadership and use of power. In the area of defense, Congress was willing to increase the defense budgets in an effort to support their alliances as well as curb the growth of the Soviet expansion; whether it be in the nuclear arms race or in the space race. Thus during the Kennedy administration, the US nuclear arsenal reached the highest levels (prior to the Reagan administration).

Johnson was a skilled politician, he like FDR aimed to build a better American society. Being the Senate Majority Leader, he was privy to the inner workings of the Congress benefitted him. He was skilled at wheeling and dealing, the "Johnson treatment" was used to get ambivalent congressmen to back policies. In foreign policy, it was during the Johnson administration that presidential overextension became far more pronounced. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964) gave the president the authority to act on any measures he believed were necessary in an effort to promote the maintain peace and security in region. In doing so, President Johnson was able to commit troops first as part of training and aiding the government of South Vietnam to later full-fledged American involvement. The questions raised by Congress at the time were few and greater trust was placed in the hands of the president. The Southern Democrats gave their unwavering support to the president. The Democrats had also been afraid of losing Vietnam in the same way Truman lost China to the communists (Kenworthy 1964).

Nixon, won the election of 1968 on the promise of ending the war in Vietnam with dignity. Like his predecessors, the president used his powers to large extent in extending the bombings to Cambodia and Laos as well as attempting to strike a deal with the North Vietnamese prior to his election. In 1970s, college campuses all over the U.S. were once again set aflame as a result of the presidential excessiveness in the decision to bomb Laos and Cambodia. In his diplomatic endeavors with China the administration kept the secret negotiations away from congressional intervention. Thus, asserting his

powers as America's Chief Diplomat'. However eventually the bubble burst on the overextension of presidential powers. Nixon, stretched the powers of the president just like his predecessors. In the post-Vietnam America, Congress and public opinion were not as forgiving and far more assertive.

President Ford though was severely subverted in his activities in comparison to Johnson and Nixon as there was greater congressional oversight together with the passage of the War Powers Resolution (WPR). Prior to the Mayaguez crisis, the government in Saigon had fallen and Ford appealed to Congress to provide aid to the government in Saigon but Congress refused. However, in a particular incident the Mayaguez wherein the president deployed U.S. marines. The incident began when the U.S. container ship USS Mayaguez was seized in the Gulf of Siam by the Khmer Rouge. The U.S. fighter planes were sent in to aid the Mayaguez in doing so they sank three Cambodian gun boats later the 14th the destroyer escort "Holt" arrived on the scene, and the president ordered U.S. forces to assault Kho Tang Island where the crew was believed to be imprisoned. Congress was informed after warning shots were fired prior to combat mission, calls were made by White House congressional liaison. However, it was not considered an attempt to consult but rather inform. This was the opinion of Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. In addition to this, there were no meetings scheduled for members of Congress to discuss the situation with the president (Ely 1988).

The Reagan presidency was also considered an imperial presidency, as he managed to use the powers of the executive to further his agenda and block out Congress out. During the Reagan years there was a "constitutional crisis" as a result of the Iran-Contra fiasco. The central aspect to this debate was secrecy which became Reagan's legacy. Ford and Carter in the aftermath of Watergate followed a policy of openness that suited the demands of presidential leadership at the time. Reagan saw the presidency as information control. Prior to becoming Governor, he was well aware of the fact that appearances mattered, therefore he put a great deal of time into the public aspect of his presidency. When faced with impending sanctions on South Africa (1985), President

Reagan was able to fracture the veto-proof coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans and imposed weaker sanctions through Executive Order (EO). In doing so, he “managed to avoid a major legislative defeat and the further embarrassment of an almost inevitable veto override” Congress overrode Reagan's veto of sanction legislation the following year (Mayer 1999). Reagan’s overuse of presidential power came in his lack of adhering to the Boland Amendments that placed barriers on funding democratic movements in Latin America this specially pertained to the Contras in Nicaragua. Therefore, in an effort to raise funds for such a movement the administration sold arms to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, the money of which was used to fund the Contras. Thus, not only did the president override Congress but was also considered as colluding with adversaries of the U.S. In the aftermath of Watergate, there was a reticence in the use of executive power this changed with the Reagan administrations. The Reagan administration made secrecy part of his tools to expand executive privilege. Through Executive Order 12356 in 1982, President Reagan became the first chief executive in four decades to mandate tighter access to information (EO 12356 1982).

The imperiled presidency were cases in which Congress as well as the public opinion asserted themselves in foreign affairs. Ford stated that “Congress in recent years has gone too far in many areas in trying to assume powers that belong to the President and the executive branch,” “None of us wants to restore an imperial Presidency. But neither can we afford an imperiled Presidency” (Hunter 1978). There was a general consensus that the imperiled presidency had begun in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and reached its zenith with Watergate and Nixon’s resignation. However, there have been times wherein presidents have lacked the ability to as public opinion and congress have moved against them.

The imperiled presidency was especially seen through the lens of the use of force and presidential powers. This was true in case of Korean War wherein President Truman without congressional approval committed U.S. forces to a war. However, as involvement continued, Congress began to raise its voice against the administration and wanted a

change of policy as well as withdrawal of U.S. forces. Republicans who had once supported Truman's Cold War strategy including Sen. Vandenberg turned against him. In addition to this, he lacked support from within his own party. Congress controlled by the Democrats, were against the use of American troops in the Korean conflict. Therefore demanded an end to crisis.

During the war in Vietnam, there were many members within Johnson's own party that were apprehensive about the powers the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution granted the president but nevertheless deferred to him. With the expansion of U.S. involvement; duration, military budgets and Americans fighting led to an assertive Congress. The media played a decisive role in bringing to light the manner and the conduct of the warfare employed. The "Tet Offensive" was a major blow to the credibility of the administration. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party, began to be far more assertive and critical of the president's actions this included Sen. George McGovern, Sen Robert Kennedy (his arch rival and nemesis), Sen. Eugene McCarthy and Sen. J William Fulbright. Public opinion towards the war effort played a critical role in the imperiled presidency. This culminated in Johnson's March 31st 1968 address to the American people where he stated , "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president".

President Nixon, used his presidential powers, to extend the Vietnam war to Cambodia in the absence of congressional authorization. There was a severe backlash to this as well as his other nefarious activities of bugging the Democrat National Committee's office in the Watergate complex. The bugging of the offices and the coverup eventually led to his resignation. But it was the bombings in Cambodia together with the release of the Pentagon papers detailing U.S. involvement in Vietnam that led to a reassertion in Congress in the form of the War Powers Resolution (WPR) (1973). It was an attempt by Congress to rein the president's ability to commit troops. The WPR , has been evoked on a number of occasions however congressional oversight has not always



been strictly enforced. President's have also chosen to commit U.S. troops without enforcing the WPR until it was forced upon them by Congress.

There have been times when president's have been maligned as a result of the lack of use of force. President Kennedy, was referred to as a 'boy' and an inexperienced president especially by conservatives. Tim Dealey once stated, "*What was needed was a man on horseback to lead this nation and many people in Texas and the Southwest think that you are riding Caroline's tricycle*" (Pringle 1993).

It was an attempt to display Kennedy's lack of leadership in America. This lack of leadership on the part of President Kennedy was displayed first at the Bay of Pigs and then during the meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna. Within the first hundred days, the administration failed to project strong American leadership. This was especially true in the operation which involved a CIA backed and trained anti-Castro forces in the U.S. The aim was to overthrow the Castro regime, Kennedy was skeptical however also feared that he would be labeled as 'soft on communism' an idea that was brought up during the campaign. Therefore against this better judgement, Kennedy went along with the plan and was clear of no direct involvement by the U.S. armed forces. The failure of the invasion, displayed the weakness of the president

Like JFK, Carter lacked partisan support in domestic affairs this was seen in the tensions between the president and the 95th Congress. In foreign policy, Carter was heavily criticized for his mishandling of the situation in Iran both the Revolution as well as the Hostage Crisis which led to his loss in 1980.

The situation changed with the end of the Cold War with congressional reassertion, together with an ideological shift. With the lack of a visible external threat, there was greater focus of domestic politics. Like Clinton during the 1992 campaign, "its the economy stupid". President Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992 and was the first president to be elected after the Cold War ended. Therefore, he was charged with charting a new course for the U.S. in a unipolar world that lacked a clear enemy. The

Clinton presidency is very often termed as the imperiled presidency as a result of an ideological resurgent Republican Congress. Framing U.S. policy in light of the hostile domestic environment and the uncertain external environment was difficult. Clinton like Wilson and Truman before him faced an America that no longer was interested in fighting wars. However as president, Bill Clinton had to deal with a fragmented Europe one wherein ethnic communities weighed the battle, the idea of terrorists and non-state actors created a national security crisis etc.

During these times, humanitarian intervention as well as globalization became the benchmark of U.S. foreign policy. This together with the fierce partisan polarization of Congress were the battle lines that framed the Clinton administration. The Republicans in Congress condemned Clinton's humanitarian interventions as well as passed several resolutions that attempted to curtail the president to act in foreign affairs. Americans no longer had an appetite for long drawn out wars or interventions. But when situations looked dire, like in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the ethnic cleansing conducted by Slobodan Milosovic, the international community, the media and common Americans pushed the the president to act (Hendrickson 2002).

Like Clinton, President Bush lacked experience in foreign affairs. The honeymoon period that most president's witness was also lacking as the supreme court was the deciding factor in the 2000 election against Al Gore. However, the Bush administration is very often termed as the 'return of the imperial presidency'. President Bush as a result of unified government as well as the 'rally effect' was able to inflate the powers awarded by the constitution . The Authorization for Use of Force (AUMF) for both Afghanistan and Iraq together with international support from the UN gave the president unbridled powers in waging the wars in both countries. In addition through EOs, the president expanded government in the creation of the Office of Homeland Security which became a Department. The administration expanded the the intelligence agencies this was especially true in domestic surveillance that was argued by many as a harbinger on the basic rights of citizens. Therefore, though Bush had no clear cut foreign

policy agenda was thrust with an agenda that expanded the powers of the presidency to wage wars, conduct domestic surveillance in the name of national security. In the aftermath of the 2006 midterm, Congress under the Democrats attempted to reign in the presidency but it was a little too late.

From the above narrative, it is clear that presidential leadership in the and driving of foreign policy is an important factor in the conducting of foreign policy. The role of actors such as the president and Congress as well as the Departments play a major role in the decision making process. Therefore, understanding foreign policy entails the understanding the roles these actors play. The basic idea of this research is to analyze through presidential leadership, the ability of President Barack Obama to bring together international as well as domestic coalitions in his policy towards Iran. This research focuses on the constraints and the enablers at the domestic and international level in the formation and working of these coalitions and alliances.

The available research does not offer an in-depth study of Obama's leadership skills in foreign policy, both at the domestic and at the international level. Therefore, this research attempts to offer a holistic analysis of Obama's foreign policy leadership constraints and enablers in foreign policy at home and abroad.

In the course of the thesis, comparison will be drawn with other presidents, both Democrat and Republican. This will be true of Congress as well. The scope, like most presidential scholars, will be to analyze the various changes as well as the continuity that has taken place. The scope is also to understand the future of U.S. engagement with the Middle East as well as the success and failure of Obama's presidency.

The objective of the research is to understand and comprehend the role that presidential leadership plays in foreign policy vis-a-vis the Obama Administration. It is also to grasp the manner in which Obama conducted foreign policy. In addition to this, the research is aimed at examining Obama's strategy of engagement with allies as well as adversaries.

Lastly it is aimed at analyzing the partisan polarization of Congress with respect to Obama's foreign policy.

There are three aspects that require testing in this research;

1. The nuclear deal with Iran has restored presidential pre-eminence in foreign policy making which was recently undermined by congressional action.
2. The success of Obama's Iran policy is dependent on his ability to carry traditional allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia.
3. The Republican inflexibility in Congress has made Obama appear partisan despite his repeated attempts at bipartisanship

Therefore in understanding presidential leadership, there are a number of questions that are raised which include the following;

1. To what extent was Obama able to engage with Iran?
2. What were the constraints that Obama had to work under to frame his policy towards Iran?
3. Has the President's foreign policy divided the government or has it brought about bipartisanship between the branches of the government?
4. Has President Obama been able to build a consensus on Iran (within and outside the US) or has he fallen victim to a division he himself created?
5. Has Congress undermined presidential authority by inviting Netanyahu to address it and by writing to the Iranian hardliners not to accept the nuclear deal?

The research methods that will be used for this thesis will be deductive in nature. It will be both analytical and descriptive. The research will be based on primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources will include statements made by the President, government officials and members of Congress. It will also encompass government

documents, reports and bills ratified as well as not ratified by Congress. Secondary sources such as periodicals, books, newspaper articles, analysis done by think tanks that focus on presidential leadership, security issues etc. will be consulted extensively.

The analysis of the proposed research will be a qualitative as well as quantitative. Quantitative in terms of analyzing the speeches made, bills voted on, amendments made etc. Through the proposed research the role that presidential leadership plays in foreign policy both at home and abroad will be analyzed.

## **Chapter I**

### **THE BUCK STOPS HERE**

#### **The American Foreign Policy Process**

*“The Presidency is the most visible thread that runs through the tapestry of the American government More often than not, for good or for ill, it sets the tone for the other branches and spurs the expectations of the people”*

*- Vice President Mike Pence*

## **Introduction**

Leadership is the power to “orient” and “mobilize others”, it is also the ability of a leader to be a team player. How well a leader leads his team determines the success of the leader. Though leadership qualities are important without power a leader cannot lead. Therefore, power and leadership go hand in hand. The powers of the presidents to lead are enumerated, inherent or implied by the Constitution as well as the position he holds as leader (Nye 2008).

The aim of the chapter is to better understand the presidents ability to lead. This is especially true concerning both internal and external dynamics. In an effort to understand these dynamics the chapter will address the powers of the president as well as his relationship with the various members of his administration and Congress. These relationships are an important way to understand the leadership ability of presidents in respect to the Constitution, the advisory system as well as Congress. The Constitution grants the president certain formal powers which have been extended overtime by virtue of the office as well as circumstance. The president though considered the most powerful figure in American politics and the only nationally elected leader, is constrained by various factors; the internal and external environment. The aim of the research is to understand and delineate whether ‘presidential pre-eminence’ in foreign policy exists.

In an effort to do so, this chapter will first address the notions of the presidency presidency and the constitutional authority granted to the president. The second part of the chapter will address the relationship the president has with his advisors and to what extent they contribute to the process. The third part will deal with Congress and the its members play in the formation of foreign policy.

## **Presidential Leadership**

Presidential leadership entails the ability of a president to mix both hard and soft power. Hard power is more of the carrot and the stick while soft power rests on the ability of the leader to shape preferences. Presidents also have formal and informal power

(Nye 2008). A president's soft power is very much in tune the power to persuade. Presidents are expected and often do extend their authority beyond the realm of the constitution. Persuasion, bargaining and compromise are ways in which presidents exert influence. However, this is not restricted to only the domestic policy alone, it includes the White House, bureaucracy, the various departments and Congress. It also extends to the international community (Neustadt 1990). In the leadership dynamic as well as the use of power, most leaders, are careful in the use of hard power and soft power. They mostly use a combination of the two which Joseph Nye defined as Smart Power'. Presidents very often use trade-offs to keep intentions in check so as not to upset the balance between hawks and doves. Therefore, they are prudent in effort to maintain balance (Nye and Armitage 2007; Trent 2016).

Presidential leadership lies in the ability of the president to persuade. Neustadt states that presidential leadership and his power of persuasion go hand in hand. Edwards III extended his research beyond the purview of persuasion and in the realm of bargaining and compromise. The power to persuade is also the power to bargain which is a tool at the president's disposal. A successful president has to also exploit his political circumstances in an effort to pass his agenda. Presidents also have the ability to transform politics by reshaping his influence on it. The concept of transformational leadership elevated the idea moral leadership, transforming both the leaders and those they lead. Transformational leaders have an "extraordinary potential influence over followers" and "immense" potential to influence them. A pertinent question is whether and to what extent a president persuade others to follow them (Burns 1978; Edwards 2009). Transformational leaders make use of a crisis in order to inspire their followers. Transactional leaders on the other hand, make use of hard power to appeal to their followers, a carrot and stick affect (Nye 2013; Burns 1978) "An eventful leader influences the course of subsequent developments by his actions. An event-making leader, on the other hand, does not just find a fork in the historical road but rather presidents in this position attempt to create it. Such leaders are called transformational



leaders”. However, event-making can be constructive as well as destructive (Hargrove 2008).

There are external and internal enablers or constraints that have been highlighted by neoclassical realism that affect presidential leadership. The gap between the external and the internal plays an important role as this is especially in the case of the use of force. Sometimes leaders use force abroad as a diversion from problems at home. But scholars believe that presidents do not always intervene abroad to pander to or divert from domestic or internal problems. The modern presidency entails the expansion of the scope and influence of the government. The chief executive has become the primary source of policy making. The presidency is considered to be a ‘landmark in the political landscape’. The presidents tend to maximize; this manifests itself in global affairs (Greenstein 2009a b).

In fact, in the arena of foreign affairs, a president wields greater control rather than domestic affairs. The Constitution as well as the inherent powers and the international environment have extended the president’s domain over foreign affairs especially during the Cold War. The structures which were framed at the end of the second world war and during the Cold War, centralized the foreign policy process. A president’s dominance over foreign policy has more to do with Congress and the Constitution

Though it has been presumed that leaders alone have the power, in a democracy followers have power as well. They have a choice of following the leader or they have the the ability to resist. Followers empower leaders and vice versa (Nye 2008). The president’s ability to persuade falls within the domain of his ability to build coalitions. Though George Edwards (2009) states that catering to a domestic audience. It can be applied to the international environment as well after all politics is now intermestic. However, the presidents use of discretionary powers is unilateral.

Leaders are not only constrained by internal and external factors, but they are political agents. They are the drivers of policy. Though they are influenced by external and internal forces. They are driving forces behind a particular policy. The circumstances do affect the way in which they make policy. Which begs the question are leaders imprisoned by circumstance. The two level game is an ideal way to explain the interrelationship of foreign and domestic policy (Putnam 1988).

### **Presidential Leadership: A Constitutional View**

The American Revolution gave rise to a deep seated hatred for the monarchy as well as suspicion of executive power. Thus, the 'articles of the confederation' did not make provisions for an executive branch. At first the Congress attempted to carry out administrative as well as executive work through a system of committees but this proved difficult. This in turn led to the setting up of executive departments that improved the day-to-day functions and gave rise to the need for an executive. Though there was still a fear of the executive, many of the colonists sought the framing of a new federal constitution. Under the articles of the confederation, the U.S. whether known as '*The Congress*' until 1781 or *The United States in Congress Assembled* had a presidency. Thus though the position of the president under the Articles was weak it nevertheless existed. During the Article of the Confederation, the colonists faced a great deal of administrative issues and it had become apparent that there was a need for a federal constitution. The first Continental Congress (convened in 1774) to the last session of the second Congress (1789) there were fourteen different presidents from nine of the thirteen colonies. They served an average term of a year. These presidents were exposed to the first notions of executive power as well as the formation of executive departments (Ellis 2015).

The Convention was a remarkable learning experience for the Framers. Issues ranging from the relationships between the federal government and the states to the relationship between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches were discussed and debated. In reference to the executive branch, issues such as its tenure, a single or a plural

executive (i.e. a council), and an executive chosen either by the legislature or the people, or by the state government were raised.

One of the champions for a strong, energetic and a unitary executive was Alexander Hamilton. Though there was a great deal of apprehension as to the role of the executive, this was a result of the experience with the King of Great Britain.

In the *Federalist Papers*, Hamilton argued and outlined the need for a strong executive. These papers especially the portions that pertained to the executive were incorporated as part of Article II in the U.S. Constitution. Federalist Papers 68 to 70, laid down the shape and form that of the executive envisioned by Hamilton. Paper 68 stated the mode of appointment of the chief magistrate of the United States. The executive was to be independent for the continuance of his office and owed allegiance to the people alone. There was a fear that if he were not independent, it would give rise to complaisance. The election and re-election depended on a special body of representatives i.e. electors. The electors were chosen by people of each state and were equal to the number of senators and representatives of the state at the national level. These electors would then vote for the president. Their votes were transmitted to the seat of the national government, and the person who attained a majority of the whole number of votes was to become the president (Federalist No 68, Pole 2005).

In addition to this, the House of Representatives would decide the president if there was not a single person who acquired the highest number of votes. The paper also addressed the legislative duties; this included power to return a bill that was passed by the legislature. Under the Constitution, this was the power of the veto. However, there were to be constraints in doing so, the president's action could be reconsidered by two thirds of both Houses. As part of his legislative duties, the president have the authority to convene both houses of the legislature, or either of them, and in case of disagreement between them. He also has the duty to executive the laws. The president had the power to make treaties with the advice and consent of the senate. This meant that two thirds of the senators present had to concur. This was unlike the the monarchy in Britain, wherein the

King of Great-Britain was considered the sole and absolute representative of the nation in all foreign transactions. The president with the advice and consent of the senate was to nominate and to appoint ambassadors and other public ministers, judges of the supreme court, and in general all officers of the United States (Federalist No 68, Pole 2005).

In Paper No 69, Hamilton discussed the character of the executive. The magistrate was to be elected for four years and was to be re-eligible if deemed worthy by the people. In doing so Hamilton, laid out the term that the president would serve as well as the necessity of public support. He also separated the president - an elected official from the King of England who was a hereditary ruler. Unlike the King of England, the president would be liable to be removed from office. The president could be impeached for committing acts of treason, other high crimes and misdemeanors (Federalist No 69 Pole 2005). Hamilton also addressed the duration of the chief executive in Paper No 71 and No 72. There were two aspects to this; one hinged on “personal firmness” and the second “stability” of the system of administration. Hamilton proposed a four year term as it would grant “firmness” to the executive and render it valuable. On the other hand it was not long enough to give rise to fear and anxiety regarding public liberty. The executive was also eligible to serve multiple terms as the American people would allow. However, by the twenty-second amendment to the Constitution the term-limit was set to two terms (Federalist 71 and 72 Pole 2005).

Hamilton also addressed one of the most contentious issues that plagued the presidency the commander-in-chief. President was considered the “commander-in-chief of the army and navy, and of the militia of the several states, when called into the actual service through legislative provisions”. Thus, limiting the president’s power in respect to the King as well as the governor of New York. In the constitution, this falls under two articles; Article I wherein congress has the authority to declare war and article II the commander-in-chief clause. Therefore being commander-in-chief was tantamount to a

‘first general and admiral’. The president has the authority to grant reprieves and pardons the execution being, impeachment (Federalist No 69 Pole 2005 ).

In Paper No.70, Hamilton put forward the idea of a “vigorous” executive which was considered inconsistent with a republican government. However, it was also stated that an energetic executive was an important part of good government. This was essential in matter pertaining to “foreign attacks”. In doing so, the future role of the president was an important dynamic in matters pertaining to foreign policy especially in times of crisis. Hamilton defined the energetic executive in terms of unity, duration and competence. The unity of the executive , ensued a great debate over whether there was to be one or more than one executive. This was considered an important aspect in terms of protection against foreign attacks. “Plurality in the executive concealed the faults, and lacked responsibility” ( in terms of censure and punishment) (Federalist No 70 Pole 2005). The unitary executive. Theory states that all federal officers that exercise executive power should be under the president (Calabresi and Rhodes 1992).

In Paper No 73, in an effort for there to be a strong executive, there was a need for support. Paper No 74 addressed the authority of the president “commander-in-chief” as well as the power of the pardon. No 75 offered an in depth understanding of the president’s ability to make treaties. No 77 addressed the power of the chief executive to appoint this included Judges, as well as the head of executive departments on the advise and consent of the Senate (Pole 2005).

The U.S. Constitution came into force in 1787, after much deliberation among the delegates of the thirteen colonies. The main aspect discussed during the convention was the nature of executive. The delegates of the convention vied for an institution that was powerful enough to pass laws and weak enough to avoid despotic rule. This stemmed from the hatred towards the British monarchy. The Constitution provided for three branches of government that were separate but at the same time equal. The framers provided for a system of checks and balance s wherein the Congress and the Executive Branch would check the other in terms of the use of power or abuse of power and the

Supreme Court would check both institutions the Congress as well as the Executive. Article II of the Constitution delineated the powers the executive was to possess. In matters pertaining to foreign policy, the president would consent with the Senate but would have ability to dominate. In domestic as well as in foreign affairs (more so in foreign affairs) the president was to share powers with Congress more specifically the Senate. Over time it was in matters pertaining to foreign affairs that the president was able to assert his leadership and authority.

The president's legislative role expanded throughout the 19th century, Presidents Jefferson and Jackson used the party mechanism and leadership to further their agenda. Therefore, through party affiliation, presidents were able to garner greater power and autonomy in legislating through the tools granted to the executive. With the dawn of the 20th century, the powers further expanded with the expansion of the U.S. role in world affairs. Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt expanded the powers of the office in both the domestic and foreign policy spheres (Wayne 2009). The powers of the president go beyond the Constitution and into the realm of inherent and discretionary powers. Powers that over more than 200 years have become synonymous with the presidency. This was the practical aspect of the U.S. presidency, especially pertaining to foreign affairs; initiation of war, the use agreements, and termination of international commitments (Bradley and Morrison 2013).

The powers can be divided into formal powers and informal powers. As part of the formal powers there are enumerated powers and implied powers. Enumerated power are stated in the Constitution and implied powers are those that are inferred by the Constitution and inherent powers, these are more specifically in matters pertaining to foreign policy that grow out of the national government. The informal powers possessed by a president are mostly political and not stated in the Constitution. This included the power to persuade, and the ability to engage in the politics as well as to use the formal powers. The ability of the president to command and persuade are vital to the success of the presidency. The informal powers of the president have grown exponentially as a result

of the polarization of Congress and the public as well as the expansions in communicating with the public (Genovese and Spitzer 2005). In the use of inherent and discretionary powers, presidents challenge the power wielded by Congress. Legislators have found it difficult to confront the president in order to overturn the agreements made. However, there are specific climates under which presidents act unilaterally, either when the partisan climate was not conducive or during a crisis situation. The latter was especially seen during the Bush years (2001-2008). In addition to this, the partisan barriers were non-existent as the Republican controlled Congress for six of the eight years (Owens 2009). However, there are also systemic constraints that have created an impediment to leadership. This includes checks and balances as well as the power sharing tenants envisioned by the founding fathers. This prevents presidents from acting unilaterally, though presidents have in the past.

Article I Section 1 of the Constitution invested legislative powers in congress, which consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Section 8 states that congress has the power to “collect taxes and duties”. As well as authority to “declare war”. Article II Section 2, states that the president may make treatise “with the advice and consent of the Senate”. Throughout the history of the U.S., a majority of treaties have been approved by the Senate this also includes the Treaty of Versailles. Members of Congress have also been made a party to the discussion in leading up to the negotiations of treaties. The Senate had also been granted the prerogative of ‘confirmations’. Congress has the ‘power of the purse’, thus giving it the authority to levy taxes and tariffs as well to approve government expenditure, authorize foreign policy programs etc. The Congress has the war powers prerogative. This was further established by the 1973 WPR (Crabb and Holt 1980 ).

The president is in fact the only nationally elected leader, the presidency is shaped and defined by the men who occupied the position. Article II Section I , states that “the executive power shall be vested in the President of the United States of America”, the confusion in this was that executive power of the president was based on a couple of

clauses in Article II. The executive power clause as well as the oath of office confers the necessary authority for presidents to act. The president is also considered chief executive of the national government as well as the administrative chief. Nominating officials is part and parcel of his job description. The framers left much to practice of the presidents to work out the loopholes in the Constitution. They wanted a strong executive one that would have enough power to govern the nations policies but simultaneously had to pander to the fears of the public who were still afraid of the monarchy. In the case of George Washington, he valued the constitution and the letter of the law but he also guarded presidential prerogatives (Cronin 1989). Thus, presidential power is a determining factor in presidential leadership as well as dominance in foreign policy.

Article II of the Constitution designates the president as ‘chief diplomat’. It is this aspect that gives the president the authority to recognize governments and make treaties with other nations. By virtue of this, the nation views the president as able of addressing an international crises as they require swift action. In addition to this, the president has the exclusive authority to determine which governments the U.S. can and should recognize. He also has the power to end relations with other countries. As the ‘Chief Diplomat’, he is responsible for building foreign relations and improving national security. Forming positive alliances is helpful in times of war and natural disaster. As Chief Diplomat, the president sends and corresponds with foreign leaders (Cronin 1989; Lindsay 1994). The flexibility awarded by the Constitution allows the president greater leeway in the manner in which he fulfills his task. That is changes in the international environment alter the presidency. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a greater role played the U.S. in international affairs and thus changed the way in which the successive presidents acted. The Cold War aided the rise of the U.S, as a ‘world leader’ and by virtue of that gave the presidents ‘unprecedented power and influence in international affairs’ (Hamilton 2009).

The implied powers used by the president entail the ability of the president to act unilaterally based on his interpretation of the constitutional power. The domestic climate particularly plays an important dynamic in a president’s need to act unilaterally. The use



of Executive Orders (EO), presidential memorandum and veto powers fall under the ambit of executive privilege. These powers of the president, are constitutionally implied and have trickled down as a result of practice. There are certain tools granted to the chief executive that have made the making of policy possible (Mayer 1999). Executive privilege are often used to withhold information, the Supreme Court though legitimized this claim they did not make it absolute as was seen in the *U.S. vs Nixon* 1974. Executive privilege became, one of the main powers the president wielded. The connotation of the phrase was first used by the Eisenhower administration but in actual fact dates back to the formation of the Republic. The power it wielded is under Article II of the Constitution and the authority of the president to withhold information from other branches. Most presidents made use of it, but it was Bush Jr that extended its use (Gregg and Rozell 2004; Rozell and Sollenberger 2009). These powers granted to presidents also fall under 'presidential prerogative', Locke defined this as the power "to act according to discretion, for the public good, without the prescription of the Law, and sometimes even against it". For Locke , in times of emergency laws have to be set aside and the executive has to act at his discretion in the serving the larger community (Arnhart 1979).

E.O's are part of the president's powers, on legal lines EO's are considered a formidable tool in making foreign policy (Mayer 1999). In the post 9/11 political climate, President Bush signed a number of E.Os that came to define the U.S. foreign policy and the war on terror. The Office of Homeland Security was set up as a result of an E.O. In addition to EO's, presidential memorandums are another way in which president's direct and dominate policy. The memorandums are similar yet different in comparison to EOs. In considering their similarities, they are both forms of action that are enforced by law, the differences are in the way in which they are numbered. On the one hand, an EO sounds more assertive, EOs are required by law to be published in the Federal Register, memos on the other hand may or may not be published depending on their content (Cooper 2001). The signing of statements are another way in which presidents wield their dominance. These are official announcements issued at the signing of a bill into a law. During the process, presidents usually make their

policies clear, that is whether they support the bill or not. Sometimes presidents are forced to sign bills especially if they pass over presidential vetoes (Pfiffner 2009). Signing statements grant the president the ability to explain his comprehension of the meaning of the law including the manner in which he is to construe it and enforce its provisions. For this to have practical effect, the president has to direct the executive branch not to enforce a statute or enforce it in a particular manner. This can be achieved with or without a signing of a statement. These have become more beneficial for public knowledge and the public presidency (Harvard Law Review 2012).

The power of the veto is another tool at the disposal of the president and his ability to lead the policy making process. Vetoes are constitutionally mandated. However if a president chooses to veto a bill, Congress by two-third majority can overturn it. The power of the veto is authorized in Article I of the Constitution. Vetoes serve more than a legislative tool, they are considered as a legal weapon used by the president in his battles against Congress. In his use of the veto, presidents prevent Congress from enactment of a measure. Woodrow Wilson called the power of a veto “beyond all comparison” (Spitzer 2001; Watson 1988; Copeland 1983).

The early presidents were less inclined to use the veto; President Washington used the veto twice, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams did not cast any vetoes. President Monroe used the power of the veto only once. However, Madison vetoed 7 bills. When presidents exercised the power the veto, the emphasis was placed on the constitutional prerogative. It was Andrew Jackson that changed the way in which vetoes were used, he vetoed 12 bills more than his predecessors combined, he cited constitutional as well as a concern for social and economic factors in using the vetoes. Later, presidents continued to use the vetoes but it was John Tyler who vetoed 10 bills which led many in Congress to think of impeachment. The power of the veto gained precedence with Andrew Johnson who vetoed 29 bills however 15 of those were overridden and Grover Cleveland who used it 584 times during his two administration. FDR also made use of his veto power during his three terms in office.(Watson 1988). He

used it as a political tool to remind Congress that he could wield the authority to do so. During the Cold War, presidents made greater use of the veto as power and the use of president power increased. Truman and Ford used the veto to build a stronger base for electoral purposes. When congress is controlled by the opposite party, there is a greater possibility that the president will use the veto to enact legislation. The veto is also often used to check the powers of the Congress. The Presidents also have the power to use the pocket veto, though this requires a more rigorous procedure its effect as well as it is absolute and cannot be overridden. During the 1970s, Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter avoided pocket vetoes during adjournments. Congress formalized procedures for receiving presidential messages during adjournments. Presidents delegate agents to receive enrolled bills on their behalf, this is especially true when the presidents are out of the country (Spitzer 2001; Watson 1988; Copeland 1983).

Presidents have also managed to usurp some of the powers designated to congress. This mainly includes the ‘use of force’. The Constitution designates congress with the authority to “declare war”, “raise armies”, maintain a navy, and to regulate the military forces , as well as control the budget. Presidents use their discretionary powers when it comes to the use force especially under the ‘Commander-in chief’ clause, as well as per the oath of office wherein the president swears to *“faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States so help me God”*. In addition to this, presidents as a result of their position are able to take action in times of a crisis especially when the decision requires immediate action. This was true during the Berlin Airlifts as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis wherein these presidents deployed forces and put military forces on high alert without seeking congressional approval. In these cases, it was the president who exercised supreme control over the nation's military actions. In the use of force president’s exploit the rally effect which may not be constitutionally mandated but congress and the public defer to the president. In some cases congress and the public force the president to act (Howell and Pevehouse 2005).

The rally effect worked for George W Bush. President Clinton as a result of public pressure was forced act in Bosnia-Herzegovina ethnic cleansing crisis as well as for Bush and 9/11. Very often when presidents use force they tend to do so in a multilateral setting as the credibility both at home and abroad is an important factor.

### **Presidential Leadership Styles**

In dealing with presidential leadership, the character and personality of the president are a determining factor. The character and personality defines the manner in which the president uses the constitutionally mandated powers as well as the inherent powers. In addition to the powers granted to the president, it is important to understand the characteristics of the president in an effort to understand the manner in which he wields power. There are various models that determine the leadership qualities. Indecision making, Allison put forth three models, the rational actor, organizational model and the bureaucratic model. The rational actor assumes the president or leader behaves in a rational manner. The second and their models hinges on the bureaucracy and other departments playing an important role in the decision making process (Allison and Zelikow 1999). There are various models that determine the leadership qualities this included; the Pied-piper model of leadership, fire-fighter model, the puppet model the salesman model.

The **Pied-Piper model** is based on 'follow the leader' kind of leadership. The second that is the **fire-fighter model** is one wherein a particular environment brings out certain traits in the leader and the response to a particular situation. The firefighter model could be used to justify George W. Bush's excessive use of executive control over foreign policy after 9/11. The justification was that the nation was in peril and required a swift response. This model could also be used to explain the manner in which Cold War presidents extended their authority and power that led to the imperial presidency. The third, **puppet model** focuses on the followers and lastly the **salesmen model** focuses on the relationship between leader and follower, wherein the leaders make a sales-pitch to the followers, in order to get support from the followers, it is akin to 'going public'.

Here is where the importance of the bully pulpit and the 'rhetorical presidency' comes into play (Grove 2007). Presidents have to sell their policies and agendas to the public in an effort to build a support base. Most presidents, adapt given the issue or situation both internal and external. Thus context matters. A successful president will embody all these aspects of leadership as they are all intertwined and dependent on each other. Therefore all these aspects are incorporated by a leader to deal in varying degrees to deal with the different situations that might arise during his presidency.

In addition to the above characterization of presidential leadership, there are other ways to determine leadership they are as follows; director, administrator, magistrate, delegator, and facilitators. The president as **director**, the president as a leader has extensive experience. In this case, leaders tend to dominate and control the decision making process. They prefer to be directly involved in the process. However, presidents tend to dominate certain policy areas, Johnson and Truman dominated the domestic agenda, while Kennedy and Eisenhower focussed on foreign affairs to a larger extent. As a director the president establishes an agenda and persuades the public as well as the institutions such as Congress and interests groups to support his policies. The president is considered to be the moving force in the American system, this is more in tune with his transformational leadership ability (Edwards III 2009). A president is at times considered to be an **administrator**. In this case, a president tends to control situations less than the previous group. Decision making is less centralized, less hierarchical, even though their own policy preferences do play a role they are more willing to compromise. Bill Clinton in matters pertaining to domestic policy while George W. Bush in matters pertaining to foreign policy fall within this purview. The **Magistrate** model, is an aspect wherein leaders who lack the experience to adequately put their power to use. They tend to tighten the inner circle. Presidents like JFK, Eisenhower in domestic politics while Truman and Johnson in matters pertaining to foreign policy. The **delegator**, are leaders who find themselves lacking power and experience. These leaders tend to delegate their duties to experienced staff members. This also means that they have a higher tendency to have a cabinet made up of far more

qualified members than themselves. President Bill Clinton in matters pertaining to foreign policy fall within this category of leader. As the governor of Arkansas, President Clinton had little or no foreign policy experience, therefore he surrounded himself with foreign policy experts like Colin Powell, Madeline Albright etc. Like Clinton before him, George W. Bush was also a foreign policy novice. Like Clinton before him Bush promised to focus on domestic policy rather than foreign however just as Clinton foreign policy became the focal point of his agenda (Preston 2001). Presidents as **facilitators**, wherein presidents understand their limitations and adopt and exploit the environment to fulfill their agendas. These presidents rather than persuading members of congress for support, they work the margins and build coalitions. Facilitators, very often make things happen that may not have been successful. Effective facilitators recognize opportunities and exploit them, directors on the other hand reshape policies (Edwards 2009). President's do not always follow one kind of leadership but rather an amalgamation of many depending on the issue and environment.

### **Presidential Leadership and Dominance in Foreign Policy Making**

Presidential dominance over foreign policy can be described as a pendulum and even a tug of war between Congress and presidents as well as the external environment. Presidential leadership in the ambit of world affairs hinges on cooperation, creation of coalitions for instance as well as unilateral action. During FDR's administration, the president skillfully led the allied coalition against the central powers during the Second World War. Since the beginning of the Cold War, U.S. presidents have either gone at it alone or they have done so through the system of alliances with Congress playing a deferential role. During these crises, leaders tend to set aside their differences in the interest of national security. During periods of international crisis, the rally effect both internal and external tend to be beneficial to a president (Flynn 2014).

The international environment, contributes a great deal of a leeway for a president to dominate. President's in making their foreign policy are encouraged to 'go international' as a way to gain support for their foreign policy decisions. The commitment

to international leadership was institutionalized further at the end of World War II, through a series of commitments made by President Truman. This came in the form of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan that were aimed at defending Turkey and Greece. Every president since Truman has been concerned with going international. A president finds the prospect of going international attractive, for he has more authority to act internationally than domestically. When going international, the president speaks for the U.S. as a whole, but often he cannot be sure of his ability to commit the as the executive shares powers with congress (Rose and Thompson1991).

International events at times require swift action and legislating can be tedious. Presidents also have a great deal of resources at their disposal as well as institutions to aid in the decision making process. Foreign policy issues require unified and strong action one that can be provided by the President. Foreign policy issues are not always high on the agenda of voters. Presidents have also been more successful in garnering support to fulfill their foreign policy agendas in comparison to their domestic agendas. However, all these attributes also depend on the international and political climate which could affect the dominance of the president in foreign affairs. The overextension of presidential power led to the notion of an “imperial presidency”. With this there was a backlash within the U.S. that led to a temporary loss of presidential dominance and leadership in foreign policy making. Presidential dominance over foreign policy once again attained an unrivaled position during the George W. Bush years which have been deemed as the ‘return of the imperial presidency’. Therefore, in almost cases a crisis situation spear heads presidential dominance in foreign policy (Peterson 1994; Lee 1980; Rudalevige 2006).

With the notion that presidents have the ability to act internationally rather than domestically, Aaron Wildavsky (1966) argued the theory of the two presidencies. That is the political elite and the public rely on the president to act in matters pertaining to foreign policy while at the same time they rely on Congress on matters pertaining to domestic policy. In matters pertaining to major foreign policy issues president’s seldom

fail this especially pertains to congressional responses to presidential initiatives. Presidents prevailed in 70% of the times in matters pertaining to defense and foreign policy in comparison to 40% on matters concerning to domestic policy. However, the constitution is not considered the only avenue which grants presidential dominance in foreign policy. The external environment and the changes in world affairs contributed to presidential power that has been especially true since 1945(Cronin 1979).

Given their unilateral powers, president's have the ability to respond swiftly during international conflicts, negotiations between nations, monitor nuclear programs, and use of force against terror attacks. Presidents deploy a wide range of unilateral directives that are aimed at addressing these foreign crises. The international environment makes it especially difficult to reverse policies instituted by presidents. In conducting foreign operations, critics may be reluctant to end it as the costs of prematurely ending an operation may have political costs (Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008).

Foreign policy making is intermestic, that is domestic environments play a critical role in the either acquiescing or asserting control over the process. Presidents or leaders, often take into account their international environment in framing foreign policy. Leaders often seek external support for their foreign policies. Thus, presidents prefer to have multilateral support rather than unilateral policies (Rockman 2000).

For any foreign policy endeavor undertaken by a president, especially the use of force, structural uncertainty plays an important role. As a leading superpower, the U.S. and the president are charged with the responsibility to advance its interests abroad. This responsibility gave the president leeway in his dealings internationally. The president also operates within the tripartite context that is; the domestic, international and political arena. Presidents are also more likely to use force abroad if their domestic base were in support of this. This was especially true in the Cold War. There is an alternative explanation, that is president's if they are weak domestically might pull away from use of force given their fear that it might end badly. However backing away could also



indicate diminished stature. A president seeks to maintain relative balance between the domestic and the international (Ostrom and Job 1986).

There was a great debate on presidential unilateralism in making policy during the Bush administration. Presidential unilateralism allows the president to set policy and the ability to act alone, independent of institutional constraints. Though unilateralism has been associated with Bush presidency, the issue pre-dates to the Second World War. For Bush, there were a number of issues on which the Administration unilaterally worked this included Kyoto Protocol. In the post Cold War phase, though it was the U.S.'s unipolar moment it also gave rise to a measure of multilateralism. During the George H W Bush administration the idea of multilateralism gained credibility. However by the mid 1990s the idea was beginning to wane (Patrick 2001).

### **Presidential Leadership and the Role of Advisors in the Making of Foreign Policy**

Presidential pre-eminence in the foreign policy making apparatus lies in the president's choice. That is, it is at the president's disposal of who to consult in matters pertaining to foreign policy. Though presidents dominate foreign policy, the influence of advisors on policy differs depending on the president as well as the issues. At times presidents rely on their inner circle and at other times they rely on a formalized approach which includes the heads of the departments. However, the extent to which a president relies on members of his administration is dependent on the relationship between him and members as well as their proximity to him. It is through this advisory system that presidential dominance in the arena of foreign policy can be seen.

In going beyond the decision making process, the managerial style of a president is an important way to analyze the members influence on the president. The managerial style of a president is depended on the personality, experience as well as the context of the situation that a president finds himself in. According to Alexander George, there are three basic classifications of the way in which president's deal with their staff they are; collegial, competitive and formalistic. In the **collegial style**, presidents seek to develop a

team like atmosphere, one that fosters diverse sets of opinions from which the president will have to choose from. This sort of set up fosters a great deal of discussion. In order for this to be productive the advisors in some part also have to get along. At various stages of the decision making process the president enlists the advice from various levels within the bureaucracy. In such a system, the president has to be ready for an intellectual debate, he also has to be comfortable with dissent among advisors as well as advisor's disagreement with him. The advantage is a tremendous exchange of ideas, brainstorming sessions etc. The downside to such a situation is that, hashing out policy is one aspect and carrying out policy is another. In such a process the latter gets delayed (George 1980; Dyson 2014). The **competitive style** fosters discussion and diverse opinions as well, however the structure is not formalized. Therefore, those closest to the president are most likely to be heard. The Clinton White House was organized on these lines. However, there is no hard and fast rule, and the type of decision making scenario changes depending on the context as well as the environment (Mitchell 2010). In this style, there is an overlapping of roles within the policy making process, this in fact could create a situation commonly known as organizational chaos. The subordinates compete to be heard by the chief executive. In order for such a structure to work, presidents have to be comfortable with conflict among advisors. FDR's White House worked along these lines (George 1980). The **formalistic structure** wherein the president himself imposes order and control, this structure is more in tune with the hierarchical set up and organizational structure of Graham Allison's (Mitchell 2010; Dyson 2014).

In addition to these models, a president by virtue of his dominance in the policy making process, has the ability to choose the inner circle of advisors. This often relates to the relations these members have and their proximity to the presidents. JFK and LBJ focused on informal process. The 'Kennedy Kitchen' cabinet focussed on the president's associations with the members of his cabinet and inner circle rather than the formalized structure of the NSC. LBJ's White House functioned on informal decision making

process as well as, this was specifically geared towards the ‘Tuesday Lunches’ (Dallek 2013; Goduti 2009).

Many a times presidents enter office assuming that they would focus on the cabinet structure as the major centre for decision making however over a period this has undergone drastic changes. A president’s ability to lead their cabinets lies in the ability to juggle egos between the various actors involved in the policy making process as well as their relationship with these actors. Presidents do not always make use of the cabinet as a mechanism for decision making, with different crises the mechanisms are altered. Most presidents have not used the cabinet as a vehicle of collective leadership, collective leadership is common in a parliamentary system but may not necessarily work in a presidential form of government. The role played by the departments are mainly advisory in nature however they also have to fulfill certain bureaucratic processes. The president is considered the ‘ultimate decision maker’, the plaque on President Truman’s desk read as ‘the buck stops here’ was indicative of the power the office wields. President's in the past have tended to undermine the use their cabinets There are various dynamics to the cabinet, an ‘inner cabinet and an ‘outer cabinet’. The former consist of the Department of State , Defense, Treasury, Justice theses are the main departments that deal with the important and pivotal issues relating to foreign policy which are of the highest national security concern. Thus, they mostly have direct access to the president. The president has additional sources of advise in matters pertaining to national security, this includes the NSC created in 1947 (Pika and Maltese 2002).

There are also *ad hoc* committees that are created to deal with a particular crisis situations the most common being the EXCOMM (created during the Cuban Missile Crisis). Presidents also have special councils to aid in the decision making process. For some presidents these councils are just symbolic for others they play a role in the policy formation process (Pika and Maltese 2002).

Therefore, the daunting task for an incoming chief executive is to form an interpersonal relationship with the bureaucracy. Within the bureaucracy there is

the permanent bureaucracy as well as the temporary; the former consists of careered officials while the latter consists of political appointees. The president as leader of the bureaucracy will have to deal with the rivaling factions between the permanent and temporary bureaucracy (Halperin and Clapp 2006). Therefore, a president has to form a connection between himself and the bureaucracy. However, a president has to also establish leadership between the White House and the bureaucracy which is an ongoing affair. As the president relies on the bureaucracy to follow through on his agenda (Jones 2005).

The president's principal advisors in foreign policy matters are of two kinds: those in the Executive Office, such as the White House advisors, and his Assistant for National Security Affairs or National Security Advisor (NSC Advisor); and the senior cabinet secretaries. The influence they have on the president in foreign affairs, depends upon the style of the president, and therefore varies from president to president and on the basis of issues. The tug-of-war between the advisors is not the only pressure which influences his foreign policy decisions. Other pressures include those from foreign governments and domestic politics, the president has to balance these concerns (Mangi 1994).

#### *National Security Structure*

In the national security process, over time and with the different administrations a president's relationship with his advisors have undergone changes. Inter-departmental relationships are important in the policy making process. These relationships often create immense rivalry in the policy process. This is primarily due to the personality dynamic as well as their relationship with the president (Pika and Maltese 2002).

In the national security process, the State Department plays an important role. It is considered to be one of the oldest departments, the principal duty of the department is assisting the president in making decisions pertaining to foreign policy. The department is also entrusted with establishing relations between the U.S. and other countries as well as conveying the president's policies abroad. This is achieved through various embassies

and ambassadors that are dispatched all over the world as well as the different areas which operate under the Department. The department like all others is structured hierarchically. In spite of it being the oldest and the chief advisory body to the president, overtime it has been noted for its ineffectiveness as well as its overly bureaucratic structure and size (Meyers and Ransom 1937).

The relations between the president and Secretary of State have varied overtime. According to Cecil V Crabb and Kevin Mulcahy the relationships can be categorized on the basis of four models. The relations between FDR and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull was one in which the president was his own Secretary. FDR for most part mistrusted the State Department and found Hull overly cautious. During the Second World War, Roosevelt found it easier to bypass the State Department, the divide and rule strategy encouraged competition among members of his cabinet. The Truman -Acheson relationship falls under a 'partnership model'. Wherein Acheson was aware of the position Truman held as chief executive. Under Acheson the State Department reached its pinnacle as an influencing organ. Acheson believed in a "strong presidency" as well as unity within the government which would strengthen the presidency, he was also skeptical about coordinating bodies such as the NSC. The Eisenhower-Dulles relationship was described as "maximalist". The factors for a maximalist secretary included; close relationship with the president, his views and counsel matched the president. Irrespective of their differences they spoke in one voice, the president deferred to the secretary on foreign policy, he was the chief architect on policy process and his preeminence depended on the president's success. During the Johnson years, the White House-State Department relations were based on "consensus building" this entailed; a reliance on his advisors and resistance to dissenting points of view. Rusk did not criticize the president and believed in the U.S. diplomatic processes. There was also a lack of understanding (especially regarding Southeast Asia). The relationship also provided for congress to assert itself in foreign relations. A rival State Department emerged during the Nixon-Kissinger years. Kissinger as NSC Advisor, was the de facto Secretary of State, under his direction the Nation Security Staff was the "principal vehicle" for implementation of

policy. The Secretary of State William P Rogers was weak in comparison to Kissinger who used his proximity to the president to the maximum, they also shared mutual interests. The NSC analysts grew in number as well. During the Reagan years, Alexander Haig called himself the “vicar” in the “formulation, conduct, and articulation of foreign policy.” As the president was a foreign policy novice, he required Haig as they both shared a similar world view. However as Haig and Reagan lacked a previous relationship, the White House Staff inserted itself in making policy. The relationship was mired by misunderstandings, he publicly criticized those close to Reagan like Edward Meese and James Baker, he was tagged as not a “team player”, he was seen as preempting the president and overreaching in his role. His major drawback was his perception of the other players within the cabinet and his desire to take control (Crabb and Mulcahy 1986)

The newly created Department of Defense (DOD) and the secretary also grew in importance. However, it was with McNamara that the department grew in importance. The main role of the department and its secretary were to provide information and aid in the decision making process. The Secretary of Defense wears many hats he plays an important role in framing national and defense strategy, he is in charge of the defense establishment as well as the budget. He is also considered to be a ‘crisis manager’. It is in these cases that he worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and other military advisors. One of the most important titles held by the Secretary is ‘civilian’ control of the military establishment. This over time created a deal of conflict. However, the idea behind his position was to balance civil and military so as to not have the army in complete control (McCormick 1998; Smith and Miller 2011). The creation of the Office of Secretary of Defense was an effort to aid the Secretary in balancing the civilian and military roles. It plays a prominent role in the interagency process. It was during the Kennedy administration that the department came into prominence. Eisenhower for his part, was to a great extent his own secretary of defense. Eisenhower reorganized the DOD so as to further centralize the functions of the secretary, with a corresponding reduction in the power of the military services. As the U.S. commitment in Vietnam grew so did the role of the secretary. McNamara’s full-fledged reorganization of

the Pentagon was not monitored very closely by Kennedy. The two also had a good personal and working relationship which played an important role. McNamara strengthened his relationship with the White House during the Johnson years. He was very often known as the architect of the Vietnam War (Kinnard 1980). Casper Weinberger, saw his role as restoring U.S. military capability. On matters pertaining to policy he often had divergent views to the state especially when it came to arms control. Regan's strategy of limiting the role of the NSC, gave cabinet secretaries rein over certain issues. Weinberger played an assertive role in policy making this was especially true of the U.S. military forces employment. Rumsfeld like Weinberger and McNamara detested the interagency process. He reminded the military that he was in charge of the DOD and not them. He also felt that the interagency process was not helpful when it came warfare (Smith and Miller 2011).

### *The National Security Council*

With the end of World War II, the national security structure was altered, there was a need to streamline and have a more structured national security set up. Congress in an attempt to organize the national security system, passed the National Security Act 1947. This led to the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) as well as the DOD which housed the previous War Department. This new set up created an interagency process. That is the NSC was made up of the State, DOD and other departments pertinent to the foreign policy process as well as when the need arose. The actors involved in the NSC depended on the presidents as well as the crisis at hand. At times there was a tug of war between State, DOD and the NSC advisor who coordinated the activities of the NSC. Since its inception, the NSC has played a major role in the making of foreign policy It has very often sidelined the influence of the State department and the DOD. The president as chief decision maker, had to balance the roles of his advisors. Other than the NSC , presidents have used the NSC as well as their advisors within the White House at their discretion. This includes the expanding the role of the NSC advisor as well as the chief of staff (Hoxie 1982) .

During the Truman administration, the Secretary of State and the State Department played an important role in foreign policy. Truman's relationship with George Marshall and Dean Acheson as well as his inexperience in matters pertaining to foreign policy was seen in his reliance on the departments. It was only during the Korean War that Truman relied a great deal on the NSC. The first NSC meeting was held in September 1947, during the Korea War, Truman began to attend meetings a regular basis. Decision making in the Truman White House was through a few trusted advisors (Nelson 1985; Sander 1972).

During the Eisenhower years, the decision making process was formalized. The Eisenhower presidency was defined as the 'Hidden Hand' presidency wherein, the president operated behind the scenes rather than the front of the line. During the Eisenhower years, though it might have appeared as if others like John Foster Dulles were running the show, it was in fact Eisenhower who played a dominant role. The president was not considered 'over-bearing' or one that wanted to be in control all the time though he was. He was more of a delegator, but at the same time was well aware of the functioning of his government. Eisenhower's leadership was that of a non-standard mode he had indirect control thus it looked as though he was apolitical (Greenstein 1994). The NSC during the Eisenhower years was made more efficient by extending the number of actors that participated in process. Under Eisenhower, the position of National Security Advisor (NSC Advisor) was created to coordinate the activities of the council. President Eisenhower solidified the role of the NSC in the decision making process. During Eisenhower years, the NSC staff was expanded and further streamlined its role. The NSC thus became the central decision-making organ in supporting the executive decision making process. It also became an integral part of the Executive Office of the president. The position of the NSC Advisor was that of 'managerial custodian' whose duty was to be a balancing actor within the policy making system. During the Eisenhower years the NSC Advisor directed the process of the NSC and rather than offering substantive policy advice. This was the case with all three of Eisenhower's advisors. They mostly played the role of 'honest broker' (Burke 2009). In spite of the expanding



role of the NSC, the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles kept in constant touch with the president. This was achieved through memos as well as daily meetings.

The Kennedy and Johnson White Houses were less structural in nature. During the Kennedy years, the informal process of decision making redefined the role of the NSC as 'an intimate forum'. The 'Whiz kids' took over and had the ear of the president. The youthfulness of McNamara and Bundy overshadowed Rusk at State (Nelson 1991). The decision making process during the Kennedy years also included presidents own special advisors like Ted Sorenson, Dave Powers, Kenneth O'Donnell and RFK. The relationship between Dean Rusk and McGeorge Bundy were strained. Turf wars were a common scenario in these instances. However, Kennedy preferred *ad hoc* groups. Bundy as NSC advisor was not limited in his role to coordinate policy for a specific function. In fact Bundy functioned as a conduit to the president. The powers of the NSC advisor were expanded, Bundy was able to dominate the foreign policy formulation process instead of Rusk. A reason for this, was the inability to mobilize the State Department as Rusk rarely expressed his thoughts which gave Bundy an edge. However, Rusk's role was altered after the mistrust created in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs (Preston 2001).

Bundy, played a dual role; honest broker of the day to day policy process as well as 'policy advocate. Both Kennedy and Bundy disliked the overly formalized structure of the NSC therefore in light of this Kennedy's policy making structure would emerge as less formal and less hierarchical. (Burke 2009). The Johnson years like the Kennedy years were also defined by the informal process. The main mechanism under which the national security structure worked through the 'Tuesday Lunch'. The role of NSC Advisor did not undergo much of a change. During the Johnson administration, the process was more along the lines of groupthink. Relationships between the Secretary of Defense and NSC Advisor were far more cordial than Bundy and Rusk (Mulcahy 1995).

These lunches had a personal element to them. The actors shared a close ties which aided the decision making process. The attendees during these lunches were a small group of the top most officials, they included Walt Rostow, Secretary of State

Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and then Clark Clifford, Chairman of the JCS General Earle Wheeler, Director of the CIA - Richard Helms, Press Secretary George Christian (Mulcahy 1995; Humphrey 1994).

During the Nixon years, an attempt was made to revert to a more formalized decision making structure like that of the Eisenhower years. However Nixon's associations with Kissinger, personal advisors as well as the chief of staff played an important role in the decision making process. Halderman and Erlickman playing the role of "gatekeepers". They controlled access to the president on the domestic side. On the other hand, Kissinger controlled the foreign policy dynamics. Henry Kissinger thus became the president's right hand. It was Kissinger as NSC advisor along with the president that directed U.S. foreign policy. This was especially true in the case of the engagement with China as well as the détente with the Soviets. Kissinger tried to circumvent the role of the Secretary of Defense and JCS. The Secretaries of Defense and State raised the alarm bells towards Nixon's approach. However, Nixon's relationship with Kissinger was not always easy, this was especially true as a result of the dominant role Kissinger played in foreign affairs (Glad and Link 1996; Rudalevige 2005). Kissinger managed to navigate the decision making process. This allowed Nixon to receive information that had already been screened through by the bureaucracy (Haney 1994).

Under Carter, the competition between the Secretary of State and NSC Advisor did not end with Vance and Brzezinski, it continued during the term of Edward Muskie as well (Garrison 2001) The tug of war was especially true in the case of the hostage crisis in Iran. The diverging view points of both Vance and Brzezinski reached a high point during the crisis which eventually led to Vance's resignation. Vance had close connections with the "foreign policymaking establishment". Vance unlike Brzezinski was not vociferous on issues, and avoided the limelight this was at odds with Carter's organizational process. By 1978, the rift between the two had become public and hampered the policy making process. As the hostage crisis came to head and the rescue

ensued, it did so with the support of Brzezinski but not Vance. With the resignation of Vance over the hostage crisis, and the ascendancy of Edmund Muskie at State, the renewal of turf wars once again began. During the Reagan years, the Secretary of State played an important role given Haig's experience. However, McFarlane and Pointdexter that played an important role. Though the Iran Contra affair was conducted by the NSC (Mulcahy 1986). The Chief of Staff during the Reagan years played an important role in matters pertaining to foreign policy. This was especially true in the case of the Iran Contra Affair.

The NSC under Clinton further expanded to include the National Economic Council, economic advisor, the Chief of Staff, Ambassador to the UN, the Vice President and his staff. The problem with the multitude of actors garnering consensus was difficult. Anthony Lake, NSC advisor was inclined to value the moral purpose of U.S. foreign policy. Lake and Deputy National Security Adviser Sandy Berger were particularly close to President Clinton. Clinton began his presidency with the intention of maintaining a balance between a White House-centered model and that of the cabinet. There was a high degree of collegiality among the principal members of the foreign policy team during the first years of the Clinton presidency. In framing policy on the basis of consensus has not always proven to be effective (Massari 2000; Auserwald 2011). During his second term Berger conducted the meetings with the principal committee more frequently than in the first term. They were able to make decisions concerning arms control, Kosovo counterterrorism etc (Auserwald 2011).

The Bush administration raised questions regarding the role of NSC advisor as broker. Firstly, the Bush administration was made up of foreign policy heavyweights and career foreign policy experts. President Bush's "war cabinet" included Vice President Cheney, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Chief of Staff Andrew Card, and Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet (Woodward 2002 ). The 9/11 attacks altered the course of the administration and its agenda. As a result of 9/11, this elevated the role of

Condoleezza Rice within the administration to more than just a 'broker', she led the meetings on the foreign policy, thus signaling her status among the members of the Bush team. The situation surrounding the post 9/11 days and months created a difficult and contentious environment for the NSC and also for the National Security Advisor. In the days following 9/11, the president chaired the NSC meetings himself. Rice, coordinated between the Secretary of State Defense and the CIA (Burke 2005a b). As NSC advisor, she voiced her opinion when it came to Afghanistan and the military operations she played a dual role of brokerage and policy advocate. The duality in the roles was required during the tumultuous times as the president was not very well experienced in dealing with matters pertaining to foreign policy. Her role changed during the decision to go to Iraq, this created a rift between the president and Powell. Rice was unsuccessful in being the honest broker when it came to the war in Iraq. Rice was closer to Bush than any of her predecessors (Rothkopf 2005; Daalder and Lindsay 2003, Burke 2005). During the deliberations, Condoleezza Rice demonstrated her skill acting as an "honest broker" and custodian of the decision-making process (Burke 2005a, 2005b).

### *The White House Staff*

Apart from the national security structure, the White House staff plays an important role in the process as well. In organizing the White House, there are various ways in which presidents deal and relate to their staff. Presidents are considered to be "Process Managers", wherein the chief of staff plays an important role of coordinating and directing the functioning of the White House. There are other ways in which presidents organize the White House, wherein they solicit the advice of people not based on technical knowledge as much for their wisdom and judgment. The Kennedy White House functioned on these lines, with Robert Kennedy (JFK brother) playing an important role in framing policy. Very often presidents who solicit the advice of these men necessarily are not part of the White House set up. This is basically based on the 'wise heads' approach. The other way in which the White House is organized by presidents is by focusing on men who are experts. This includes persons from varied

backgrounds from legal to social, to foreign to domestic. Presidents, who are often considered to be outside the political fray specifically Washington outsiders, tend to pick more experienced personnel. Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton George W. Bush were all considered Washington outsiders therefore they required an experienced staff especially in dealing with members on the Hill. Lastly, many presidents rely on youngsters or those significantly younger than themselves, the Clinton administration with George Stephanopoulos as his communications director functioned in this way. A reason is willingness to do anything. However there is another side to this, Theodore Sorenson or Bill Moyers were not just errand boys to JFK and LBJ. They played a major role in the decision making process. Consensus building was one of the best ways to organize the White House, however organization as mentioned earlier depended on the president. In the organizational process, a more formalistic style was used by Truman, Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan wherein there was a clear division of powers and ranks. The Competitive style, though this would be well suited in terms of the unpredictability that comes with the territory of policy making it is not one that is commonly used by president the exception being FDR. The collegial model is an attempt to rectify the drawbacks in the formalistic and competitive model, this was the case with the Kennedy and Carter administration. Competitive advocacy is somewhat in line with a competitive structure, which is flexible non hierarchical overlapping functions etc (Jones 2005; Buchanan 1990).

The president's staff includes presidential advisors and who are in close proximity as well as close to the everyday working of the Executive branch. Therefore, they play an important role in the decision making process. In organizing his staff a president's ability will determine the success and failure of his staff in achieving their goals. A president in most cases picks his staff from those who were on the campaign trail with him. A result is that the president will be comfortable with these people as well as they also understand the president's personality and beliefs. Herein lies the problems as well running a campaign and running the government are two separate entities.

Among the members of the presidential staff, his chief of staff is an important personality. The chief of staff, is considered the “gatekeeper” to the president. The chief of staff often controls access to the president. The expansion of the executive branch with the varying departments was a way to deal with crisis situations however over time these agencies were not designed to deal with issues that arise unsuspectingly. Therefore presidents have designed their processes that would enable them and not hinder their decision making capability. As a result, they have preferred an inter-agency process this process tends to blur the lines of executive office of the president and the White House Staff. The role of the chief of staff as a member of the president’s inner circle has risen to prominence as part of the decision-making apparatus. The position was introduced by Eisenhower in an effort to streamline policy making in an effort to improve it. The chief responsibility is to act as an administrator and to coordinate the decision making in the White House as well as provide the president with information, and maintain the president’s calendar. He also acts as a political advisor. In this scenario proximity and prominence is an important factor. The secretaries of various departments have to go through him to get to the president. Thirdly, he serves as a guardian, he serves at the unique purpose to protect or rather shield the president from the press, members of congress and other members of the administration. Fourthly, he acts as mediator to try and keep the peace in fast paced movement in the White House. The chief of staff uses an array of tactics to get his job done this could include manipulating situations as well as actors (Cohen et al 2002).

During the Eisenhower administration, the chief of staff Sherman Adams dominated the White House with an iron fist. He controlled access to the president, cabinet members went through him to the president. Thus, Adams dealt with the petty politics and the President did not have to deal with it thus maintain his pristine image Adams spent great deal of time in settling turf battles. His power lay in his proximity to Eisenhower. Adams kept a tight control on the working of the White House, however this too is considered a problem (Pfiffner 1986).

During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the position of the position was abolished, Kennedy preferred to be his own chief of staff. The decentralized process of both White Houses meant that they were accessible to anyone who needed to meet him. Instead of the chief of staff, he had an Appointment Manager, Kenney O'Donnell a member of the Kennedy's Irish Mafia. He functioned in much the same way as a chief of staff. LBJ like JFK, followed a decentralized working of the White House. His structure was more fluid. However, unlike in the case of Kennedy wherein the president dominated his staff with intelligence, Johnson dominated them with fear (Pfiffner 1986).

During the Nixon years, Alexander Haig played an important role in advising the president. He was considered the go between the president and secretary of state. Prior to his resignation as a result of the Watergate scandal and his role in the cover-up, H.R. Halderman played a vital role in the Nixon White House. He restricted access to Nixon. Halderman often acted as the president's alter ego. During the Carter years, there was an urgent need to restore faith in the presidency as well as limit the control of the chief of staff and allow the departments to play a bigger role. It was only in 1979 that Carter appointed Hamilton Jordan. Under Jordan, the parameters of the chief of staff were expanded. He was involved in the negotiations during the Hostage crisis, he was the first to play a major role in foreign policy. During the Reagan years, the chief of staff continued to play an important if not definitive role in the policy process. Reagan's troika included a counselor, Edward Meese, James Baker (chief of staff) and his Deputy Michael Deaver. Reagan's second chief of staff, Donald Reagan played a major role in the Iran-Contra affair. He became part of the NSC. However, as a result of the Iran Contra affair he resigned. The ascent of Donald Reagan to the NSC made the chief of staff a vital part of the decision making apparatus. The rise of the chief of staff was in part of the systemic environment and a response to it. The more foreign and domestic policy intertwines, the greater the difficulty to separate the two. However, like in the case of other advisors (Cohen et al 2002' Pfiffner 1986).

During the Clinton years, the relatively inexperienced Mac McLarty as his chief of staff. However, McLarty was not a very effective chief of staff. However, McLarty was replaced by Leon Panetta. As an 11 term congressman he was one of the most experienced Washington insiders. He brought order and focus were a top priority for Panetta. The reason for this was Clinton favored group discussions. Unlike some, Clinton brought all issues under consideration rather than focus on certain aspects (King and Riddlesperger 1996).

### **A Tug of War Between Bipartisanship to Partisanship: Presidential Leadership and Congress**

Presidential pre-eminence in foreign policy making has been called into question as a result of the role congress has played. Presidential leadership of congress is another major aspect, that has to be taken into consideration. In dealing with congress there are a multitude of dynamics to consider this includes partisanship, constituents, assertiveness, acquiescing deference and defiance. The checks and balances as well as shared powers are one of the main reasons behind the tug of war between the two branches. The relationship between president and congress has gone through many stages within the ambit of making foreign policy. The relations can be best described as a pendulum; from acquiescing, to assertive to an all right tug of war. From the inception of the Republic, the relationship between congress and president has undergone these changes that have come to define the American presidency and the making of foreign policy. There are a number of variables that alter the relationship between these two branches, that is a crisis situation, ideological shift in the party, partisan polarization, party control , relationship between president and members of his party in congress. All these variables factor in, while considering the institutional part that congress plays.

Presidents employ various strategies, tactics and techniques to build a majority in congress. Without his party's support in congress, a president will find it difficult to achieve legislative success. Since FDR, the president and White House staff have worked arduously to gain support for legislation. When necessary the president could tap



into his alliances. The president has two mandates, one from his party and one from the public who elected him. These two mandates in most cases overlap and are the same. It was FDR who established a full-fledged working relationship with his party in congress (Seligman 1956).

The president as leader of his political party is especially true in times of election. This is not only at the time of a presidential election but it is visible during a midterm election as well. The popularity of a president tends to affect his party in congress. This coattail effect can either carry his party into power or strengthen its position or could diminish and sometimes cost the the president's party altogether. The loss can be attributed to the voter turnout and Campbell's theory of surge and decline. This means that at the time of a presidential election there is a surge in voter turnout however there is a decline in turnout during the midterm election (Campbell 1991). The other theory that aids in explaining the role of president on his party is the referendum effect. This effect is closely tied to the popularity of the president. Voters tend to signal their approval or disapproval for the administration's policies (Campbell 1985). Most or all off-year elections are referendums. That is if the electorate is satisfied with the presidential policies it will be reflected on his party in congress (Atkeson and Partin 1995).

In the 2002 and 2004 elections, the 'referendum effect' together with the coattails was a success. The Republicans in both these elections did not lose seats but gained seats. In most off-year elections the president's party loses seats, however in the 2002 election the Republican party strengthened their hold in congress (Campbell 2003). In the 2006 midterm election, the referendum had a negative effect on the the Republicans. The war in Iraq was going badly which had a negative impact on the the party that was in power when the war began. It was also the sixth year of the Bush presidency, commonly known as the 'sixth year curse' (Cohen 2007). Therefore, in these instances the president's handling of foreign policy issues had a major impact on his party's performance in the elections.

The support a party gives the president of the same party is to avoid embarrassment of the party and the leadership. The president is only as successful as his party in congress. A president's success depends on his legislative success. This translates to his ability to sway members of congress. Therefore there is a dual relation between politics and policy in the presidential agenda. When presidents throw their weight behind a particular issue, his party in congress strengthens their position as well as their reputation by supporting the president. The opposition also stands to gain by withholding and creating obstacles for the president. If the president, makes a foreign policy decision or sends a resolution to congress, the opposition tends to reject it given the partisan battles that are normally waged (Lee 2008).

A president's power lies in partisan control in congress. The president is very often the spokesperson of his party. There has been a decline in party system and the role the party plays in national politics. However, the parties still rely on the president and vice versa. Hence, party leadership in congress has to work together in order to get legislation passed. Presidents since Jefferson have been willing to play an important role as expected to do so as leader of the party. The role that a president plays as party leader is extra-constitutional. The president's role has also been enhanced by the separation of powers provided in the constitution.

Another important element in the relationship between president and congress is the manner in which they relate to each other; partisanship vs. bipartisanship. In domestic politics, the two parties are on opposing sides of a myriad range of issues which include social and economic to name a few. However, the notion of bipartisanship arose out of an external crisis. During an international crisis, the rally around the flag has a major impact on the internal politics of the country. The relationship between the two was an invitation to struggle as a result of the overlapping powers between the two, it is most often called up when bipartisanship breaks down. In the face of partisanship the struggle between the two is far more fierce (Crabb 1980).

Bipartisanship in foreign policy was on display after 1948. Their similarities were seen in the following areas; national defense, need for global involvement as well as a fervent anti-communist stance. Though divisions existed, they were negligible (McCormick 1998; Merrinick 1993). Bipartisanship was a foreign policy mechanism, it was a peacetime weapon used to refurbish U.S. involvement around the world (Cronin 1980). A disadvantage of bipartisanship was with the existence of minimal dissension among the parties the president was a written with a blank cheque (Schlesinger 1973). The external threat and internal deference as well as the centralized structure of decision making played a complimentary role (Black and Black 2003). Despite bipartisanship, presidents mobilize their own party for support of a particular policy. However, the president very often has to look across party lines to garner support for his agenda and can not afford alienation (Edwards 1984). Presidents are facilitators, wherein they have to create coalitions in an effort to pass their agendas (Edwards 2009).

At times when there was an absence of an external threat, congress dominated policy making. A re-assertive Congress was seen in the second-half of the 19th century wherein Congress dominated policy making. It was called the “era of congressional government”. This changed with the U.S. entrance in World War I, the White House asserted itself and congressional challenges were limited. At the end of the Great War, Congress reasserted itself. This was seen especially with the Senate led by Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) who did not ratify the League of Nations, in doing so the U.S were unable join (Lindsay 2003; Marshall & Prins 2002; Schlesinger 1973 ; Rudalevige 2006).

In the inter-war period, presidents found it difficult to reassert their dominance in foreign policy. For instance, the Neutrality Act of 1935 and Ludlow Amendment displayed presidential deference. With the U.S. entrance in the Second World War in aftermath of the Pearl Harbor, the President Roosevelt along with congressional approval and approval of the courts was able to dominate foreign policy (Lindsay 1994).

The end of World War II, saw a resurgent Congress. However, the hopes of Congress were dashed as a result of the impending threat of communist expansion in

Europe as well as in the Middle East. This meant that a continuation of bipartisanship which also meant a deferential and an acquiescing Congress (Lindsay 2003). The Republicans capitulated to Truman and Democrats in matters foreign policy this was especially seen in their support of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. During the Truman years, the president achieved greater success in foreign affairs in comparison to domestic policy. The 80th Republican Congress checked Truman's ability to pass legislation in domestic affairs, a policy commonly known as the 'Fair Deal'. Truman labeled the Congress, "*the Do Nothing Good For Nothing 80th Congress*". Presidential initiative at this time was mostly made in the domain of foreign policy (Conley 2000; Theoharis 1971). The level of bipartisanship fell as a result of the Korean war to larger extent than in Vietnam (McCormick and Wittkof 1990). In spite of this, bipartisanship continued throughout the Eisenhower, Kennedy and even Johnson administrations (Beinart 2008).

During most of the Cold War, presidents were granted unprecedented power. In spite of divisions, they were not sizable enough to affect policy. In addition to this, the Cold War and the rally effect had still not worn off continued to prevail. Thus, this was very often is called the "imperial presidency" which was defined by misuse and abuse of power. By 1973, the presidency became synonymous with deception, lying and transgressions (Cronin 1980; Schlesinger 1973 ).

The era of bipartisanship began to erode as a result of Vietnam War. The War put an end to congressional deference and paved the way for congressional assertiveness and in some cases defiance. This was seen in the form of the War Powers Resolution (WPR) and the Hughes Ryan Amendment (1974) that attempted to act as a harbinger on the imperial presidency and attempted to create what Ford called the imperiled presidency. Many within Congress and the public had altered their opinions about the 'policy of containment' and its extensions specifically in South East Asia. These congressmen belonged to the liberal wing Democratic Party, on the other hand the Republicans and Conservative Democrats continued to uphold belief in the "domino theory" and thereby

supported the strategy of containment. This schism within the Democratic Party, propelled liberals within the Party to gain ground in the 1974 midterm elections (Prins and Marshall 2001).

The two parties began to diverge ideologically (in foreign affairs), the difference between them widened, they became more homogeneous internally and with the disappearance of the moderates the two parties became far more polarized (Brewer 2005). The loss of Southern Democrats within the Party created a paradigm shift and led to “conditional party government”. Moderates in Congress began to decline (Fleisher and Bond 2004; Jacobson 2000).

The end of the Cold War signaled defiance and a re-assertive Congress. Therefore, domestic issues played a far more important role than foreign affairs. In addition to this, the appetite of the country was also moving away from involvement abroad with the exorbitant defend budgets this was coupled with the absence of an external threat. These included the economy, environment, unemployment (Lindsay 2003; Beinart 2008). In 1991 President George H.W. Bush deployed U.S. forces in an effort to “safeguard the sovereignty” of Kuwait in opposition to Saddam Hussein of Iraq. In Congress, 164 House Republicans supported the president while 3 Republicans opposed. In the Senate, 42 sided with the president. The Democrats still reeling from the ‘Vietnam syndrome’, opposed the president 180-186 in the House and 45-10 in the Senate (Beinart 2008).

During the Clinton years, presidential pre-eminence in matters pertaining to foreign policy were called into question. A reason for this, was foreign policy was not high on the agenda as there was a lack of an external threat. The tug of war between the president and Congress reached new heights this was especially seen in the budget. This reflected the personal rivalry between President Bill Clinton and Speaker Newt Gingrich. Clinton, a self-proclaimed “New Democrat”. Under Clinton, the Democratic Party attempted to move towards the center and follow a moderate direction in an effort to address Republican issues such as crime control, fiscal prudence and family values (at least in rhetoric). The 1994 midterm elections, destroyed the Democratic stronghold in

Congress established during the Cold War. The Republicans re-gained control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. On the foreign policy front, the main debate centered around the role of the U.S. in the international sphere. The Republicans were against humanitarian aid and U.S. forces under the UN. Another factor that raised immense debate was the use of force and WPR along with the deployment of U.S. forces as part of peacekeeping forces. The areas of dispute in this respect were; Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo. The Republicans and many Democrats disagreed with Clinton's use of power and felt he was in violation of the WPR. However, the disagreement was greater among the Republicans (Beinart 2008; Hendrickson 2002). Congress in the form of the National Security Revitalization Act and the Peace Powers Act as well as the amendments to repeal the WPR attempted to tie the president's hands. These initiatives were put forth by the Republican-controlled Congress (Hendrickson 2002).

During the Bush years, the Republicans controlled Congress for six out the eight years. Therefore, Bush most often enough found it easier to pass legislation, this was coupled with the fact that America was at war and rally effect worked in his favour. The partisan control of Congress and the strengthening of his party's position in both Houses after 9/11 gave the president extraordinary leeway, one that was not witnessed by Democratic presidents during the Cold War (Rudalevige 2006).

Working with Congress requires the need to work with the leadership. Congressional leaders have an important aim that is to spearhead the electoral and policy goals of fellow partisans (Sinclair 2009). They are considered primary channels of communication between presidents and Congress. They make use of various mechanisms and have numerous resources at their disposal that are used to influence the agenda. They are very often considered to be "administrative lieutenant" (especially when they belong to the president's party). At times they differ from the president but with heightened levels of partisanship, they have become far more homogeneous. The opposition party leaders have a number of choices wherein they can offer constructive opposition or obstructive opposition which entails opposing all agenda including the alternatives. This

kind of opposition also depends on whether the “other party” is the majority or the minority (Fleisher and Bond 2000).

Thus, in the final analysis presidential leadership hinges on domestic as well as the international environment which enables and constrain his abilities to lead. Throughout the Cold War the domestic climate appeased presidential dominance of foreign policy as a result of the impinging threat from communism. This was the case in Bush’s War on Terror however since then the situation has changed. The U.S involvement in the Iraq War created a trust deficit. As a result of this, American leadership has suffered this includes presidential leadership.

In dealing with presidential pre-eminence in foreign policy making, using Iran as a case study is an important aspect. A reason for this is, US-Iran relations since the during the Cold War has undergone a number of changes. These changes have taken place as a result of a number of factors which includes the international environment as well as president’s policy towards Iran and Iran’s own policies. In understanding Obama’s policy towards Iran, it is necessary to understand U.S. policy towards Iran from a historical perspective that is right from Eisenhower to the George W. Bush administrations.

## **Chapter II**

### **FROM COUP TO AXIS OF EVIL**

#### **A Historical Overview of U.S.-Iran Relations From Eisenhower to George W. Bush**

*“We have no intention, neither ability nor desire, to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran”*

*- James Earl Carter, 39th President of the United States of America*



## **Introduction**

The presidency is considered the one institution which is at the center of policy making. One that other institutions revolve around. As discussed in the previous chapter, presidential leadership entails the ability to lead domestically and internationally. That is working in congruence with allies at home and abroad.

In the history of U.S. relations from the beginning of the Cold War to the days of George W Bush is critical to understand the overarching area of the thesis, that is Obama's policy towards Iran. There were critical moments that have the standing power to change a nation's course. In the US-Iran relationship scenario events such as the Mossadegh coup, the revolution, the Iran Contra Affair, dual containment, the 2002 State of the Union , and finally the Iran Nuclear Deal had the potential to alter the course of relations between the two countries.

Presidential pre-eminence and presidential acquiesce in policy making process together is a determining factor. Congress and the various departments as well as their proximity to the president has made a difference in the decision making process. However, decision making with regard to Iran did not always reach the president's desk, very often, decisions pertaining to Iran were made at the lower level.

During the Cold War, the dynamic of the collar and the bi-polar world order shaped US foreign this was true with Iran as well. Foreign policy became the focal point of policy making and was therefore thrust onto the front stage in a way that never had been before.

### **The Pre Revolutionary Iran: Eisenhower to Nixon**

During the Cold War and more specifically right up to the revolution and the hostage crisis, U.S. policy towards Iran was that of codling the Shah. The US under President's Eisenhower and Kennedy attempted to infuse reformist policies in Iran albeit being unsuccessful. On the other hand President Nixon gave the Shah a 'blank check' in the sale of arms.

The Cold War that took place between the superpowers manifested in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. In the post-World War II scenario, the environment in the middle east was changing fast, the soviet resistance to evacuate, incited fear in Iran led by the Shah. Therefore, the Shah turned to US and President Truman for support. Truman and his advisors were afraid to tip the balance with respect to the oil deal so as to push the Iranians towards the Soviets. The the delayed Soviet withdrawal from Iran and the spread of communism in the aftermath of World War II, created a tense situation for US administration. In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal (1946), the fear of a takeover loomed (Gavin)

For the U.S., the Middle East was not of primary importance unlike Europe and Asia. The on-going failure between the Tehran and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) to negotiate to settle the oil share however , threatened the peace and balance of power in the region. The Truman administration attempted to bridge the gap between the oil company and the British government. There was also a fear that the Shah would tilt in favor of Soviets. Members of the Truman administration such as Secretary of State Dean Acheson and George McGee Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs were both sympathetic to the Iran and critical of the British in the oil negotiations (Pirouz 2008). As the dispute waged on, it threatened the political survival of the Shah as the AIOC controlled most of the oil in Iran. In 1951, the Tudeh Party (a socialist party) rose to prominence, this was coupled with a rise of the unrest in Iran over the oil dispute. In addition, the Majlis passed a a law that nationalized oil. The US administration for its part seemed keen to avoid US involvement in Iranian sovereignty, nevertheless began covert operations that were directed at the growth and spread of Soviet influence and not so much towards Mossadegh. The Truman administration also sought a peaceful and acceptable solution. The State Department played a crucial role in its endeavor; Averill Harriman , Dean Acheson's second in command went to Tehran to negotiate a deal albeit unsuccessful. The CIA began contingency plans that were not in consultation with the State Department (Gasirowski 1987).

In 1950, the Truman administration endorsed a deal between the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and Saudi Arabia. This was set at 50:50 profit-sharing, thus setting a precedents. Therefore, Truman attempted to apply this policy to Iran (Marsh 2003). The disagreement on oil, posed a grave problem for the U.S., as the British were keen for the U.S. to the use of force to resolve the crisis. This in turn would draw the Soviets into the conflict given the Soviet Iran Treaty of Friendship. Therefore, the Truman administration through the various proposals while in office tried to bring about a deal between the two. However, it was towards the end of the Truman administration that U.S. policy began to change this was due several reasons. Towards the end of the Truman administration, it came short of regime change and throwing support behind Qavam (Pirouz 2008).

*Eisenhower and the Shah: The Mossadegh Coup and the Aftermath*

On the Iran front, Eisenhower like Truman feared Soviet involvement as well attempted to broach a deal (Marsh 2005). The coup set a precedent for the future role of the CIA in the making of U.S. foreign policy. Eisenhower's successors used the CIA and coup's to alter flailing support for the U.S. in Asia the Middle East etc. In short, the January 1953 marked a deviation in policy from the moderate Democratic approach, relatively sympathetic of Third World nationalist movements to a far more aggressive, hard-line Republican policy.

The Oil crisis's was a large part problem that was sweeping the Middle East. It gave rise to a great deal of political concern. In 1953, the administration distanced itself from Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) and sought to expand U.S. influence and defense cooperation. This included states the Northern Tier included - Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, all of whom were worried about Soviet intervention.

When Eisenhower became the president, the 50:50 oil deal was still in place but the British expected the president to support them in taking a harsher stance support. They expected a harder stance compared to Truman's vis-a-vis Mosadegh, even one that

supported a coup. Mossadegh began to backtrack on the compensation and threatened to sell Iranian oil at a 50% discount. This was to be enforced if Britain insisted that Iran pay compensation for the loss of future profits (Marsh 2003).

The situation within the administration was moving towards overthrowing the Mossadegh government. The President had given his consent to draw up plans, Dulles brothers had also agreed to such a policy outcome. Kermit Roosevelt (from the Policy Planning Bureau of the CIA) was also involved in the planning. As an addition, Mossadegh's support within Iran had begun to fracture, this included members of his own party. Operation AJAX involved three agencies: the CIA, State, and Defense. The cooperation of the Shah was impertinent to the plan. In August 1953, CIA covertly assisted a coup to depose of Mossadegh's that in turn paved the way for Iran to become a U.S. 'client state' under the rule of the Shah (Marsh 2003). The lower level officials within the CIA and the State department who were against the coup, therefore it was the higher level officials that actually pushed for it. The Eisenhower administration policy towards Iran was driven more by the fear of communism than the dominance of oil (Gasiorowski 1987).

It has been argued that the coup was an attempt to forward U.S. interests in the region in gaining a share for U.S. companies. In fact, the agreement announced post-coup gave the U.S. firms a 40% share of Iran's petroleum output controlled by the British. The U.S. had increased output in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait which compensated for the loss of Iranian oil. The coup was in fact a test to the administration's new strategy to combat Soviet expansionism. The most significant consequence of the 1953 coup, was immediate aftermath, the Shah together with Prime Minister Zahedi were able to ban all forms of opposition legitimacy (Zahrani 2002).

The coup in Iran was only the beginning of Eisenhower's Middle East policy. The Eisenhower Doctrine originated during the Suez-Sinai War of 1956-57. There were contradictions in Eisenhower's policy on the one hand he avoided siding with the allies - Britain and France in the Suez crisis, but supported the British in the coup of Mossadegh.

(Hahn 2006). For the U.S., Iran was geographically strategic, the sites in Iran were used to spy on the Soviet missile development this was especially true of the mountains in the northeast of Iran that overlooked facilities at Biaknour and Turatom.

It was under the Eisenhower administration that the U.S. began to provide military aid to Iran. After 1958, the Shah received economic aid that was aimed at reforms within the country which included land reform. In 1954 and 1955 the administration encouraged land reform and anti corruption campaigns this created tussle between the Shah and the Majlis (the parliament). At the same time, the West required Iran to be stable as it was part of the Baghdad Pact. The Shah's domestic position was also on shaky ground with land owners, Shia clerics, nationalist groups and merchants. There was a fear that pressing for reform could create additional problems. On the other hand, the Shah wanted an increase in military aid, which the president was reluctant to grant. In the aftermath of the Iraqi coup, the Shah kept up his demands for military assistance, the State Department and DOD though acknowledged that military assistance was important, the administration continued to delay it. At a July NSC meeting, the report stated that the Shah was vulnerable and Washington had to provide aid in an effort for the Shah to eliminate these vulnerable areas. It was also during the Eisenhower years that the U.S. aided the Iran's civilian nuclear program as part of the president's "atoms for peace" strategy (Abrahamian 2001, Zahrani Summer, 2002)

The various meetings between the Shah and the members of the administration were aimed at calming the fears of the Shah. The administration pushed ardently for reform. The President and the administration were successful in pushing back the Shah constant pressure for military however this was only a temporary fix.

#### *JFK and the Shah: Push for Democratic Reform*

During the Kennedy years, though limiting communist expansion was at the top of the foreign policy agenda. This was in South America and Europe especially in Cuba, Berlin and Vietnam, Iran was not the major topic concern.

During the 1960 campaign , both sides saw Iran as an important issue but did not want to highlight the fragile internal dynamics within Iran. Kennedy had signaled a change in policy towards one based on democratic reform there was nothing much that differentiated the two candidates *vis-a-vis* Iran. The election was also closely watched in Iran, the Shah had hoped for a Nixon victory rather than Kennedy as his rhetoric was more in tune with democratic reform as well as opposition to the increased military sales . This troubled the Shah (Barrett 2009).

Kennedy's foreign policy ideals were shaped by John Kenneth Galbraith, Walt Rostow who advised on a strategy of development. Despite this, President Kennedy like Eisenhower supported the Pahlavi regime rather than the Iranian people. Thought the Kennedy tears the Shah made military demands while Kennedy pushed for democratic reform. The New Frontiersmen, proposed changes in foreign policy; modernization and democratic reform rather than military aid. They were George McBundy, Walt Rostow John K. Galbraith and Robert Kennedy. Their proximity to president was greater than the traditionalists; Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Iran Desk officer – John Bowling, the previous Ambassador to Iran Edward Wailes and the current Ambassador Julius Holmes (Goode 1991).

Robert Komer became JFK's and then LBJ's "Jack of all trades" in handling the Middle East (especially Iran) and Africa. He was valuable and powerful player. Komer , disagreed with the State Department and was critical of the Shah which created inter-departmental rivalry. The rivalry extended to Ambassador Julius Holmes as well. Komer had the President rather than Holmes (Offiler 2015).

With the May 1961 protests, pushed the administration in the direction of a modernization policy one that encompassed democratic reform. the government of Jafar Sharif Emami fell and was replaced by Amini, a former colleague of Mossadegh. The U.S. was cautious about Amini, Ambassadors and diplomats in the field recommended a *wait-and-see* approach. The administration relied on the information that came from the Ambassador Julius Holmes. A *Task Force* was set up in an effort to decide a course of

action. Kennedy frequently participated in these discussions. The task force report, recommended that, the administration and more specifically Kennedy should persuade the Shah to initiate internal reforms. The Iran Desk officer, John Bowling disagreed. By 1962, the administration seemed to have given up on the idea of reform and supported the Shah. There were proposals to decrease military aid as well as a reduction in Iran's army from more than 200,000 to around 150,000. The administration in an effort to further its goal gave significant amount of financial support for internal operations. Kennedy's strategy was to gradually reduce this aid, making Iran more self-sufficient. Overall, the direction of the Administration appeared to be a departure from an earlier preoccupation with military power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. The U.S. could not allow the overthrow of the US-friendly Pahlavi regime. The Shah had failed to initiate democratic reforms that were prescribed by the Eisenhower administration had created a problem (Gilman 2003; Milne 2008).

Members of the NSC and the Task Force like Komer and others were eager to push Amini on reform however Dean Rusk was in favor of preserving the status quo fearing unrest or a possible coup. Both groups wanted reform, but disagreed on the mechanisms (Summitt 2004).

In 1962 Kennedy invited the Shah for an official state visit and presented a five-year military aid package (MAP). There were some disagreements, and the Shah asked for more. The visit was considered a success for the Shah, he was able to broker a deal for greater aid and confidence in the alliance was restored. The clause in return for military aid there was to be a reduction in the size of the army(Summitt 2004). However the situation within Iran was precarious after the resignation of Amini and the new PM was PM Asadollah Alam (Collier 2013).

The Shah used the threat of the Soviet Union to increase funds from the US. However during his 1962 visit to the U.S., the Soviet-Iranian negotiations over military defense were put on hold as a result of the Shah's visit to Washington (Alvandi 2014). Alam signaled a greater central role played by the Shah, as seen by the Kennedy

administration. It was also during this time that Komer's policy option which attempted to soothe relations with the Shah began to be taken seriously. Kennedy's policy of reassuring the Shah led him to miss opportunities to explore alternative policy options. In NSAM 228, which approved of the NSC 1550 concerning the five year military assistance to Iran. NSC 1550 "stipulated that no foreign assistance could be offered without determining whether such aid was in accordance with approved policy". The funds would also require congressional appropriations in terms duration (NSAM 228 1963)

Therefore, for Kennedy the need was to balance the traditionalist with the New Frontiersmen, in the case of Iran this was achieved by the implementation of the Task Force Report which concluded that a middle ground was necessary so as not to alienate the Shah and also for internal political change to prevail in an structured manner. The Kennedy years proved to be Iran's best hope of change, it also proved to be the U.S's last chance at engineering reform in Iran . It was through the pursuance of President Kennedy and the New Frontiers men that incited the White Revolution. Though the revolution failed as reform was not enforced properly, the Administration represented change and transformation marked a shift in U.S. Iran relations. The Kennedy approach attempted to move away from military aid and focus on economic changes. But by 1962 relations were back to the 1950s level with the US in staunch support of the Shah (Summitt 2004). With the assassination of President Kennedy , and the ascendancy of Johnson to the presidency nullified any effort of reform.

#### *LBJ and the Shah: A Move Towards Partnership*

In the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination, the Shah sent a message to Johnson reiterating support for the US as well as the need military equipment (McGlinchey 2013a). In June 1964, during what was described as a private and cultural visit to the US, the Shah met with the President and Secretary of State, Johnson saluted the Shah as a "reformist, 20th century monarch". The U.S. agreed to grant Iran a \$200,000 which signaled a change US policy. The DOD equally suddenly dropped its pressure for



exclusive jurisdiction over its personnel in Iran (Pfau 1974). It was during the Johnson administration that promotion of political reform became negligible and arms sales increased (McGlinchey 2013a).

During the Johnson years, there were two aspects that dominated the agenda vis-à-vis Iran; the arms sales and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Johnson's main aim was to calm the fears of the Shah and reiterate US support for the regime. These fears were reiterated by the Shah in a letter to Johnson. He also addressed the arms sales that were in the process during the Kennedy administration, this included the M47 tanks (FRUS, 1964–1968, Vol XXII )

The transition of Iran from client state to partner took place during the Johnson presidency and reached fruition during the Nixon years. This was spearheaded by the announcement of British withdrawal, January 1968 that created a vacuum in the region. One that the Shah was eager to fill (Castiglioni 2015).

The Shah's visit to Moscow in June 1965 crystallized the desire to repair relations between Iran and the Soviets troubled the Administration. There was a greater reliance on Ambassadors rather than direct involvement by the President. Meyer continued to reassure the Shah of US support to the regime. However on the other hand understood the Shah's dilemma , this was a result of his close association with the Shah. Meyer was against any move that would create a rift between the U.S. and the Shah, this approach was shared by many within the Washington establishment. The Shah began to distance himself from the U.S. as his military requests were not being met. There were constraints on the administration , this especially came from Congress. With U.S. involvement with Vietnam , Congress had begun to reassert its role in curbing arm sales (FRUS 1964–1968, Vol XXII, Iran, ).

Within the administration, Rostow was in favor of an arms sales to the Shah so long as the U.S. could control it. Meyer urged the administration to safeguard American interests in Iran. The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) stated that the Shah would not

want to fundamentally alter the relations. The sale of arms troubled many in Washington, especially the State Department, therefore Rostow believed it would be better to control the buying and selling of arms themselves in effort to avoid confrontation. The NSC staff as well as the State Department were vocal on their opinions on the Iran however there was no clear way to rein in the Shah's arm sales appetite without pushing him towards the Soviets. McNamara was also willing to consider a compromise (FRUS 1964–1968, Vol XXII )

The SOFA was an additional issue that had to be dealt with by the U.S. and the Majlis. SOFA was an agreement wherein U.S. forces stationed in Iran were exempted from being tried by Iran in case of disputes or crimes committed. The majlis in Iran contemplated the issue, there was a great deal of opposition within Iran. One of the loudest voices against the SOFA was Ayatollah Khomeini. In October 1964, the Iranian parliament passed the SOFA bill 70-62. The SOFA with Iran created a great deal of internal turmoil. The SOFA had an adverse impact on US-Iran relations. The agreement was also seen as a form of U.S. imperialism, concerns were raised among the low-level officials within the U.S. The State Department and DOD officials conflicted with one another over the issue. The officials of the State Department were for most part against the SOFA but would support the agreement if it did not interfere with the strategic relations between the two countries. The DOD officials under McNamara were eager to get the deal on the table. The passage of SOFA displayed the differences between the officials at the State Department and the DOD. On July 2, 1964 the U.S. approved of a five-year program for the period 1965–1969. This was added to the existing agreement that had been put in place by the previous administration. Though Washington was satisfied the Shah was not. This was reiterated by Robert Homer (Offiler 2015). The military deal consisted of \$200 million for Iran, as well as \$50 million in cash to purchase military equipment, included four C-130 aircraft and 176 M-60A1 tanks. The DOD and the Agency for International Development (AID) negotiated a deal that would conduct an annual review of military spending on the Iranian economy a change from the annual ceiling for the purchases. The Shah signed the agreement and was inquiring about

additional equipment including two squadrons of F-4C fighter jets intended as upgrades to F-5As and a new radar station. The Shah's relationship with the U.S. improved a great deal during the Johnson administration as a result of the arm sales. By 1965, the Shah had focused his attention on purchasing F11 however the U.S. ambassador to Iran Meyer was asked to stall the agreements. The extension of the military aid did not clam the Shah, contrary to the administrations belief. Questions were raised within the departments regarding the aid and the nature of such aid. There were many within the inner decision making circle who did not support this (McGlinchey 2013a).

U.S. military assistance grants were gradually phased out in favor of credit sales. This was enforced by Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1964 by representatives of both governments. Johnson appointed W. Averell Harriman as an *ambassador-at-large* in February 1965, and over the next two years Harriman made four trips to Iran in an effort to support the regime (Johns 2007).

The administration continued to feed the military appetite for the Shah inspire of the growing anti-Americanism. Johnson and members of his administration supported repressive action in dealing with protests. The discussions on the M-48 tanks, priced at around \$100,000 per tank were tabled and instead, McNamara authorized the sale of the M-60s at a reduced price. In doing so, McNamara supported the sale of the M-48s and overruled both Komer and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Frank Sloan (Offiler 2015).

President Johnson as a wheeler dealer when it came to Congress, with the overarching fear of the spread of communism and the domino effect in southeast Asia , he was able to get Congress to grant him carte blanche in dealing with Vietnam. However as Johnson's pre-occupation with Vietnam on the one hand and the Great Society on the domestic front that left little or no time for U.S. relations with other countries. Therefore, in terms of Iran the president worked with a few members of this administration in providing the Shah the military equipment required to secure the region against communist domination and temporarily satisfied the Shah's military appetite. The Shah,

seeing the preoccupation of the current president attempted to keep pushing the limit. The SOFA ignited protests that were never fully quelled and would lead to a growth of anti-americanism that would finally be the detriment to the regime.

*Nixon and the Shah: From Balancing to Primacy*

Nixon won on the pretext of ending the war in Vietnam and focusing on the domestic crisis at home - the flailing economy as a result of the War. The direct involvement of the US in Vietnam had brought to light glaring vices of US direct involvement. Therefore, Nixon's policy of Vietnamization in the broader sense was applied to Iran that of 'indirect involvement'. When Nixon became president, Iran was not at the top of the President's agenda. However, the changes in the region forced a further look into U.S. strategy. In 1968, regional changes altered the dynamics of US-Iran relations as well as the Middle East. U.S. policy towards Iran began to change during the Nixon administration. This was especially true with the balance in the Persian Gulf. At first Nixon continued the strategy set out by the Johnson administration one that focused on balancing effect. Under Nixon, the U.S. began to move towards a strategy of primacy.

The Nixon Doctrine commonly known as the Guam Doctrine was geared towards South East Asia, it stated that the U.S. would not entangle itself in the affairs of its allies unless the situation required. This meant that the U.S. would keep its treaty commitments but simultaneously would only intervene in times of a major threat. For Iran and the Middle East, this meant that the U.S. would rely on the Shah to maintain stability in the Persian Gulf. This watered down to a 'delegation of responsibility'. The Nixon Doctrine marked a change in strategy of containment in the Persian Gulf (MERIP Reports 1972 )

During the Shah's visit in 1969, Nixon's advisors warned him about the Shah's intentions, and his efforts to be acknowledged as paramount in the region. With the impending British withdrawal the Shah pushed the Administration to aid Iran in attempt to fill the vacuum in the region left by the British empire. The Shah reiterated this during his

meeting with Kissinger. Nixon was also warned by his advisors on getting involved in the middle east crisis between the Iran and Iraq over the Shatt Al Arab waterway. U.S. officials in Tehran were determined to avoid entanglement in regional rivalry (Alvandi 2012).

The Shah, however continued persuading the administration for an increase in arm sales . The State Department also reiterated congressional pressures pertaining to the sale of military equipment. The US rejected calls from the Iranian military for US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG). However, Iran's victory over Iraq concerning the dispute over the Shatt Al Arab without US help heralded a policy change. According to NSSM 66, a full policy review of the Persian Gulf with special reference to British withdrawal and the choices for US policy as well as naval activity. However, the president was advised by the State Department and the NSC under Kissinger to avoid US commitment to Iran. Between 1970 and 1972 the Nixon administration toiled with a policy of 'Iran primacy' in the Persian Gulf. There were many within the administration that advised Nixon to help cultivate the special relationship with the Shah. Kissinger though supported the policy was also cautious of such a policy. It was in 1970 , that a consensus began to build up on support for the Shah. (Alvandi 2012, NSSM 66 1969)

Nixon's middle east policy, more specifically his policy towards Iran rested on a twin pillar policy. It was based on the balance of power in the region in an effort to protect the Strait of Hormuz. This strategy also acted as a check on Iraq. The increased US military aid as well as arms sales played a major role in this strategy. The US arms sales outweighed that of the Soviets. For the US, regional balancing was a primary concern. The Shah's relations with the Gulf States, though tense at times they were on good terms, Iraqi being the exception. The twin pillar policy had its advantages , it was a positive move towards US-Iran relations. However, at the same time the relied on proxies to maintain their interests in the region. It was Nixon's predecessors that had to deal with the complications of this policy (Yetiv 2008).

Nixon's Gulf policy was one of balancing Iran and Saudi Arabia as the "twin pillars" of the Gulf, Nixon gradually abandoned balancing and tilted in favor of Iran. As a result of his longstanding friendship with the Shah, the president diverged from Johnson. This change provided for a prolific ground to satisfy the Shah's efforts for Iranian regional primacy under the Nixon Doctrine. In an effort to fulfill Nixon's Iran strategy, the U.S. removed most of the restrictions on the sale of arms to Iran. Nixon supported the Shah's dominant role in the regional context. This was a display of Nixon's commitment to the allies, that was intended to signal to calm the fears of allies in Southeast Asia in the aftermath of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. The Shah in an effort to gain support from the president, used the Nixon Doctrine to argue the necessity of arms sales for security reasons as well as stability in the region. Relations with Iran was a main topic on the president's agenda rather than a broader Gulf policy (Roham 2012).

President Nixon approved of NSC/IG report. The report stated that U.S. policy in the Gulf that would "promote Saudi-Iranian cooperation as the mainstay of a stable regional system," NSDM 92 laid out the a general strategy to promote cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It also did not mean a reduction of U.S. naval presence in the region. In addition it also approved the expansion of U. S. diplomatic representation in the lower Gulf. In addition to this, it directed the NSC, Under Secretaries Committee to review plans for U.S. technical and educational as assistance and cultural exchange. Nixon signed NSDM that promoted Saudi-Iran cooperation (NSDM 92 1970; Roham 2012)

The arm sales rose from \$750 million in 1969-70 to an annual \$2 billion in the 1970s. The sale of arms increased not only in quantity but magnitude such as the procurement of F14s and F16 fighter jets. By April 1970, a consensus was formed that the U.S. could only rely on the Shah to prevent Soviet influence in the region. The "special relationship" which had hit a roadblock during the Shah's previous visits was finally cemented. The administration began to tilt towards Iran. This was feared by the Pentagon. In the fist two years, the administration kept a low profile when it came to

arms sales However this changed with the arms Sale of 1972 (McGlinchey 2013b). Nixon through Presidential Directives put the control of arms and aid directly under the control of the State Department.

During the Nixon years U.S. policy in the middle east went from twin pillar to 'Iran primacy', US-Iran relations were defined as a 'special relationship'. National Security Memorandum 66 discussed six options regarding US policy towards the region. Kissinger was in favor of the US filling the vacuum left behind by the British. There were others that stressed on the Iranian-Saudi option. This was Iran and Iran-Saudi cooperation as well as cooperation among lower level gulf allies (NSM 66).

The Nixon's primacy strategy was further strengthened in the form of 1972 arms deal. However, the political climate differed from Nixon's beliefs and strategy. Nixon had given the Shah his firm commitment regarding arm sales, this conflicted with the bureaucracy. The climate was moving against the sale of arms, Washington delayed the sale of F4E fighter jets. When it came to credit sales, Nixon had a hard time selling the military aid package to a resurgent Congress. There was also a debate over C-130 tanker aircraft to replace the bulk of Iran's over 100 F-5A and F-5B fighter aircraft fleet with newer F-5E (McGlinchey 2013b).

The members of the administration felt that a presidential visit would ease the tensions and would probably render a boost to the sale of arms sales. The president ceded to the Iranian arms sales and gave the Shah a blank check. The May 1972 meeting, came as part of the Soviet Summit. The push for arm sales was the most of important aspect. During the meeting, Nixon gave the Shah his personal assurance that Congress would not interfere with the arms sales (McGlinchey 2013b).

The issues dealing with the sale of arms extended to the Ford Administration this only added to the president's existing problems that included credibility. The resurgence of Congress manifested itself in the form of arms sale to Iran. The purchasing power for U.S. arms sales jumped from \$150 million in 1971 to nearly \$3 billion in 1973.

The Senate conducting investigations and reports on Iran sales. The discussions also revolved around the sale of F14, F15 fighter jets. The sale of arms created tension between the branches of government as well as internal strife between members of the administration. This was especially between Kissinger who was the Secretary of State as well as the National Security Advisor and the Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger. Schlesinger and Kissinger were at opposing ends when it came to arms sales and congressional intervention. Ford's reliance on Kissinger created friction in the Administration which ultimately led to Schlesinger's resignation. In a meeting with the Shah in 1976, the sale of 300 F-16s at US\$2.14 billion was agreed upon. However, an "oil for arms deal" was not on the table despite support from Kissinger. The sale of F-18L (a multi-role fighter jet adapted for land use) was another area wherein a clash between the White House and Congress was evident (McGlinchey & Moran 2016)

The Ford administration in respect to Iran had to deal with sale of arms and congressional assertion. Therefore, for most of the administration, it was congress that constrained the president to act. The Nixon and the Ford years were two complete opposites one was defined as the imperial presidency , wherein. The powers to conduct foreign policy as well as domestic (such as surveillance) without informing Congress became part of the the powers of the President. In the case of Ford , the extensions of presidential power under Nixon were retracted so much so that it was called the 'imperiled presidency'. Congress had become far more vigilant when it came to arms sales. Therefore Ford witnessed Congressional government.

### **The Revolution and Post-Revolutionary Era**

The Iranian revolution changed the dynamics of the relations between the two countries this was evident in the hostage crisis and thereafter. The Ayatollah hostility towards at the U.S. as well as the Washington's unwillingness to negotiate with the Iranians created a crisis in the region. The secret deals made by the Reagan administration created an internal crisis within the U.S. The U.S. support for Israel and



Iran's anti-Israel policy were at logger heads with one another. The Iranian nuclear program was another bone of contention between the two .

*Carter and the Shah : The Enghelab-e-Islamia and the Hostage Crisis*

In dealing with the Shah, the president attempted to curb his military appetite and focussed on human rights. Prior to the revolution, Carter delegated dealing with Iran as it was not a top priority. Under Carter , U.S. foreign policy was expanded to include human rights. It also included a more liberal bend towards foreign affairs in comparison to the Nixon-Kissinger years which appealed to voters (Cottam 1988). Carter's notions of foreign policy hinged on acknowledging the limits of U.S. power as well as the limits of the use of military force.

During the transition, the Carter administration was unaware of the internal developments inside Iran this included the Shah's economic problems. In fact the previous administration advised against reduction in arms sales. Therefore, from the very start there was misinformation and Carter administration operated in the vacuum. In 1976, Vance provided Carter with a report on the prospective goals of on foreign policy issues , Iran did nor figure anywhere in the document. Carter surrounded himself with officials from two main groups: 'hard-core' followers who had been loyal to him from the start and outsiders. The first group called the 'Georgian Mafia' included; Press Secretary Jody Powell, and Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan. The second tier included; National Security Advisor Zibigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. They signaled a break from the Nixon-Kissinger period (Luca 2016).

Dealing with Iran ether during the arms sales, revolution and hostage crisis created more division within the Carter administration. In his decision to not pursue arms sales agreements, he incurred the distrust and criticism from the DOD and some within the State Department. Carter capitulated to the Shah and went ahead with the pending sale of 160 F-16s arms sales. But at the same time Carter put forth Presidential Directive (PD) 13. It stated measures in an effort to reduce US arms sales and establish restrictions

on arms transfers . At the same time, the administration had to consider the political risk. The administration sent Congress legislation regarding the sale of AWAC's to Iran a fierce debate incurred. The sale of the AWCS went against Carter's campaign agenda and meant a continuous presence of the U.S. in the region. Though the administration was unsure about the outcome over the AWCS, Carter continued to reassure the Shah of U.S. support (Luca 2016).

Congress was also concerned about human rights, the promotion of human rights alarmed the Shah. In addition to this, U.S. skepticism over policy was growing, within Iran, the opposition grew. This reached a height when Carter toasted the Shah at New Years , calling Iran the 'island of stability' under the Shah. Thus signaling U.S. policy had not really changed. During the Shah's visit, Vance , advised the president to focus more on the liberalization. The Shah's visit to the U.S. was greeted with protestors. Though Carter acknowledged that the Shah was having trouble, he continued to support the Shah (Cottam 1988).

The House International Relations Committee voted 19 to 17 to block the sale. As the Senate seemed likely to do the same, Carter withdrew the bill. The sale was approved after it was amended (Luca 2016). In spite of Carter's constant reassurance of U.S. support, the President in closed door meetings continued to stress liberalization and human rights. Carter in an unprecedented move , in the weeks following the Shah's visit , paid a visit to the shah. However, the U.S. ambassador to Tehran was apprehensive about the way in which the visit would be received. The Shah seemed enthusiastic, to him it demonstrated the close ties between the two countries (Carter 1982).

As the opposition against the Shah grew in the form of demonstrations , the Shah tried to hush the opposition thereby granting broader freedom however was not serious about implementation. However by 1977, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence reported that Iran was stable and would remain stable under the Shah. The ground realities on the other hand were different as reported by Ambassador Sullivan. The core advisors, like Secretary of State, and Gary Sick from the Iran desk at the state department

seemed to not clearly comprehend the situation. Brzezinski and Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger supported strong action in order to achieve stability in Iran and the region (Cottam 1988). The situation worried the president however there was limited action taken, the Shah kept up the pressure on Carter regarding the arm sales (Carter 1982).

The reforms introduced by the Shah were superficial in an effort to avoid criticism from the U.S. Washington was slow to respond and it was only in the fall of 1978 that the administration began to deal with the impending crisis in Iran. The U.S. embassy on the other was concerned about the situation in Tehran for a long time. To add to this no contingency plans were made if the regime fell. In an effort quell the upheaval, the shah promised to hold election in 1979 which was supported by the administration. Brzezinski however did not press the NSC staff for comprehensive look at the issue. The support of the U.S. further ignited rioters. The memo from the State Department dated October 24<sup>th</sup>, stated the need for political reform, Brzezinski was against reform. At first Sullivan supported engagement with the moderate opposition and then later proposed engagement with Khomeini. In matters pertaining to the use of military force, Brzezinski supported it while George Ball and Vance were against (Meons 1991). In spite of the discord in Iran, the president and the Iran embassy in Tehran under Sullivan continued to believe the Shah as the best hope for stability in region (Carter 1982).

The problem that set Washington into action over Iran was the two telegrams that Sullivan sent in November 1978. In the two messages November 1978 that the administration received from Sullivan he mentioned the Shah was considering abdication and the second, the shah was seeking U.S. advice. The president and the Secretary of state were absent, Brzezinski chaired the meeting (Arshad 1990).

As things were moving fast, in January, Bhaktiar became Prime Minister and the Shah departed from Iran and went into exile to Egypt. The U.S. were left without a coherent plan to deal with Iran. Carter vetoed the idea of any rapprochement with Khomeini which was recommended by his advisors even Sullivan. Carter continued to

support the Shah. The conflicting advice, further complicated Carter's decision making process (Slekitar 2012). During the demonstrations, George Ball was asked to evaluate the situation. At the same time, Sullivan who had supported the Shah, as time passed recommended that Shah depart Iran and the administration begin to form some sort of an alliance with Khomeini, the president refused. The President was also displeased with Sullivan's assessment of the situation and therefore sent General Robert Huyser to Iran. The president trusted Huyser's analysis of the situation which differed radically from Sullivan's. It was through Huyser that the administration continued to display support for the military as well as Bakhtiar (Carter 1982)

U.S. policy towards the Islamic Republic was not clear; the inter departmental rivalry subsided but a clear eyed policy was not possible. In the face of Washington's policy failure to see the revolution and find a possible solution, Brzezinski and his team stepped back, the State Department began framing policy. The State Department made a number of blunders that would cement policy towards Iran. One being a focus on the moderates rather than creating a relationship with the religious leaders including Khomeini. The Carter administration was in contact with moderates there were many who saw this as the US trying to create inroads with the new regime. The Assistant Secretary, Harold Saunders's memo to Vance in September 1979 entitled *Policy towards Iran*, stated that the U.S. should meet and engage with Khomeini as a form of acceptance and a way to move forward. Two months after the memo, the students took over the embassy thus beginning the 444 of the Hostage crisis that would forever change the dynamics of US-Iranian relations (Bill 1988).

On October 20, 1979, President Carter agreed to allow the Shah to enter the U.S. for medical treatment. This enraged not only the religious conservatives but the moderates as well as the people at the embassy recommended against this (Carter 1982). The Shah in fact used his clout within the U.S. domestic political establishment as a tool to seek refuge in America. The Republicans like Rockefeller and others pressurized Carter and members of the administration into admitting the Shah. This led to the hostage

crisis, wherein militants overran the U.S. embassy and took 52 U.S. diplomats hostage on the November 4th 1979. The crisis lasted for 444 days and was one of the causes behind Carter's loss in the presidential election of 1980 against Ronald Reagan. In the aftermath of the Shah's departure the working of the government was under Mehdi Bazargan. Soon this changed and Ayatollah Khomeini took over and the Provisional Revolutionary Government and all government power passed to Khomeini and the secret Revolutionary Council. Washington's initial strategy was focused on a diplomatic solution. In doing so, the administration focused a great deal of energy on backchannel diplomacy in the weeks following the crisis. This included Iranian contacts with the Palestinian Liberation Organization as well as the UN with the help of Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General. (Slekitar 2012; Carter 1982 ). An Iran working group was set up in an effort to deal with the crisis. Plans for a rescue mission began to evolve. In the meantime, the US cut oil supplies with Iran as well as froze Iranian assets this was supported by the international community (Carter 1982).

Carter exerted his presidential power and through EO 12170 froze Iranian assets. (UCSB). In passing the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977, the president acquired the power to withdraw foreign assets from the U.S. President Carter invoked the act on November 14, 1979 in order to freeze Iranian assets and properties. In the final analysis, the economic freeze of 1979 provide the U.S. banks with a great deal of revenue. They held more than \$10 billion in Iranian assets for more than a year as well as retrieved secured and unsecured loans prior to the overthrow of the regime. In addition to this, the Administration discontinued the shipment of spare military parts to Iran, ended import of crude oil, immigration checks and deportation of Iranian student who did not have a valid permits (Carter 1979; Fayazmanesh 2008)).

Khomeini had also agreed to release some prisoners (the blacks and the women). The administration thought he Swiss Embassy was able to keep in contact. However there were many willing to aid the U.S., this included the French and Panama. Most of these dealings were with Hamilton Jordan . These negotiations were confidential (Carter 1982).

The Administration also began to draw up plans for a military rescue. The rescue operation was aborted on April 24. During the discussions on the rescue plan, Secretary of State Vance was against the military rescue and favored negotiations to end the crisis. While on the other hand, Brzezinski argued for a more “forceful” stance, though he initially supported negotiation but backed away from it. Brzezinski favored the rescue operation over and above the others and therefore advocated for the mission (Destler, Gelb and Lake). The State Department and some members of the Iranian Task Force came to a stark realization that neither negotiations nor sanctions or political overtures would work. Therefore, the administration was left with one option, the rescue mission and were skeptical of its success Secretary of Defense Harold Brown was skeptical and voiced his concerns. However, domestic political concerns impeded Carter’s actions. Brzezinski and Vance clashed over Iran. Recommendations from Brzezinski that Iranian prisoners be taken and retaliatory actions undertaken (Glad 1989).

By the fall of 1980, Khomeini was willing to start negotiations with the Carter administration but to what extent has been questioned by Sadr. The freezing of the bank accounts was crucial in the negotiations, one that the U.S. would have to trade-in for the release of the hostages (Offiler 2015, Glad 1989). Republicans hammered at the administration’s for its silence on the “Reign of Terror” that took place in the aftermath of the revolution as well as the incompetence in dealing with the crisis. Thus, the constraints on Carter’s decision, included his domestic base. This included his own party, Carter was challenged by Edward Kennedy in the primaries. Carter was also restricted by his choices by the constitution (Glad 1989).

In November 1980, Carter lost the bid for the presidency to Ronald Reagan. On the day of Reagan’s inauguration, January 20, 1981, the U.S. unfroze \$8 billion of Iranian assets and the 52 hostages were released (Brown 1994)

### *Reagan and the Secret Deals with Iran*

Ronald Reagan was considered to be event making president. The Reagan presidency began as a result of public discontent with the Carter administration. (Hargrove 2008)

On the Iranian front, Reagan came to the presidency with no clear policy which was evident from the U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf. The Hostage Crisis was one of the main reasons behind his victory as a result of Carter's mismanagement of the situation. In his book *"My Turn To Speak: Iran the Revolution & Secret Deals with the U.S."*, President Bani-Sadr states that during the 1980 election campaign, there were factions within the U.S. (Regan's team) and factions within Iran that included the mullahs, Rafsanjani, Behesti and the Ayatollah that struck a deal to release the hostages when Reagan became president. The negotiations began in October and continued right up to January. Though there were overtures between the U.S. Iran Algerians as the Carter administration wanted to expedite the process the Iranians delayed the process. During the deliberations, there was also discussions pertaining to of Iran paying its outstanding debt to the U.S. to the tune of about \$500 million. The deal was signed on January 17th 1981 through the Algerians and known as the 'Algiers Declaration'. The Iranian leadership's collusion with the U.S., created a great deal of internal strife (within Iran), this was especially true as Bani-Sadr was not involved in the negotiation process as well as Carter was still president. This created a rift within the internal structure of the Iranian polity. The Ayatollah, though not directly included showed signs of his approval. The deal involved arms sales that had previously been paid for in exchange for the hostages. While the government in power in Iran under Bani-Sadr attested to negotiate a peaceful end to the crisis with the Carter administration. The deal was discussed in October, prior to Reagans victory. There were many with in the polity that stalled agreement with Carter in an effort to make a deal with Reagan. The Declaration was signed on January 17th 1981

and the while Reagan was sworn in, the hostages were on their way home (Bani-Sadr 1991).

Though Reagan came to the presidency with questions pertaining to Iran looming, he tried to divert attention away from the region for the time being. However with the Iran-Iraq war and the communist threat to Afghanistan the involvement in the region and with Iran was inevitable. At first, Reagan seemed content with keeping Iraq and Iran in place and play a neutral role the Iran–Iraq war. At the time Iraq had the upper hand, when circumstances began to change and Iran began gaining ground, Reagan took a keen interest. Simultaneously, while trying to contain Iran, the administration was apprehensive over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Soviet apparent interest in Iran. Arab nationalism was a threat to Iran, there were many in the administration that felt, US Middle East policy coincided with Israeli interests. The Iran-Iraq war provided an opportunity for Israel to rebuild clandestine contacts with Iran. Therefore Israel proposed arms to be sold to Iran, this would solve two problems for the U.S. The Soviet threat to Iran (Hooglund 1988). This would later be termed as the ‘arms for hostages’.

The administration was intensely focused on the Soviet Union specifically true after the invasion in Afghanistan. This left little time to deal with other pressing issues. The situation was changing in Iran as well, Rafsanjani became the head of the government in Iran and attempted to portray a more moderate Iran rather than spread the revolution, this was primarily as a result of Iraq. The 1985 hostage crisis, wherein U.S. citizens taken hostage in Beirut by Hezbollah (a Shia terrorist group) forced the U.S. to consider some kind of rapprochement with Iran. Reagan, was interested in opening channels with the moderates in Iran over the issue of the hostages in Lebanon but it was blocked by internal dynamics. The ‘operation staunch’ (1983) imposed an international arms embargo on Iran. Through secret arms deals with the Iranians they were able to establish some kind of relationship between the two countries. Thus, the activities conducted by the NSC staff fell outside the purview of the law. However, the administration overrode Congress and a host of procedural formalities. The staff, took



over the situation in an effort to limit the involvement of the President. Thus, Reagan was considered a reconstructive leader as altered the manner in which government operated (Skowroneck 1993).

The roots of the Iran-Contra were in the hostage crises of 1979 and 1986. When Reagan came to the presidency, he believed in the right of self determination for the Nicaraguan people and was therefore in support of the Contras fighting the Sandinista regime. The region was also strategically important as half of exports and imports passed through the region. He tried covertly various way of providing arms to Nicaragua. The program of training the Contras against the Sandinista's was directed by Bill Casey of the CIA, this caused friction with George Shultz (Secretary of State) as the move was risky. The other members of the administration Bill Clark and Ed Messe supported this. But congressional opposition began to raise problems for such endeavors especially as a result of the Boland Amendments. However, the president was keen to continue aid and the battle with the Hill continued (Reagan 1990 )

The case of the Iran-Contra affair occurred as a result of the executive–congressional authority over military aid and covert operations. Prior to this , the presidents and congress worked together on these matters and congressional assertiveness was negligible. The Boland amendments placed an additional problem for the President, as it prohibited the administration from selling arms to the Contras. The Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980 amended the Hughes–Ryan Act. It required “required government agencies to report covert actions to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI)” (Rubenberg 1988, S.2284 1980).

The Iran-contra episode began in mid-1985. According to the testimony of Robert McFarlane NSC Advisor, President Reagan approved of U.S. participation of Israeli arms sale of the TOW missiles to Iran in return, the U.S. would replenish the Israeli stockpile. The White House claimed that the president was unaware of the arms sales to Iran prior to January 1986 and failed to report it congress when it came to light. On January 17,

1986, President Reagan's written approval of the arms shipment and circumnavigated the embargo that had been placed on it by President Jimmy Carter. The problem occurred when Congress was not kept informed. As part of his constitutional authority, presidents are charged with the reporting to Congress. President Reagan's defense in the Iran-Contra Affair hinged on protection of the "moderate Iranians" that helped broker the deal (Rubenberg 1988; Reagan 1990 ).

In the aftermath of Vietnam, Congress was apprehensive over the funding of the Contra's therefore the Boland Amendments were enacted. The reason behind such a move was to avoid a Vietnam-type of situation. Congress systematically began to reduce the funding. The CIA tried a number of ways to acquire funding for the contras, this was done either through other countries and organizations. Even before the Iran-Contra Affair broke, the Reagan Administration had sustained funding for the conflict by exploiting spending loopholes in the appropriations process, such as drawdown, special funds, contingency funds to name a few. The first Boland amendment passed the House by a 411-0 vote and the Senate, and was finally signed into law by the President. Congress also passed the Oversight Intelligence Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 1984. The Act limited the authority of the CIA. The Boland Amendment excluded the NSC staff, since it was not one of the ten agencies of the Government explicitly designated. However, it did not exclude Lieutenant Colonel Oliver L. North, a key member of the NSC Staff. The Tower Commission report stated that whether U.S. involvement during 1985 in the Iranian arms sale was lawful depended upon presidential approval of the arrangement prior to its occurrence. In the absence of this, the U.S. had no authority to either transfer or consent to supply arms to Tehran (Timbers 1990).

In January 1986 (though the proposal was on the table earlier) Reagan himself acknowledged the sale in an effort to release the hostages held by Hezbollah. Members of the administration such as McFarlane met with the moderate Iranians looking to make political headway in the aftermath of Khomeini's death. The administration had also reached a stalemate in the release of hostages (Reagan 1990).

The IranContra affair developed as a result of members of the NSC which included Reagan, Bush, Meese, Weinberger, Secretary of State George Shultz, CIA Director William Casey, McFarlane and White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, coordinated through the entire foreign policy bureaucracy, and systematically hid it from the American people. The impetus for the Iran arms sales came from the national security adviser and his staff, with a big boost from the Israelis. State, Defense, and CIA, however, were never bypassed. Shultz and Weinberger played a crucial role at every juncture and were kept informed. However according to President Reagan, they did not agree with the arm sales. The CIA provided most of the logistics for the arms shipments (Canham-Clyne 1992; Scheffer 1987; Reagan 1990).

The reverberations of the Contra Affair were felt abroad. The administration suffered from a credibility gap this was especially true after the U.S. called on Western allies to avoid providing aid to terrorist states. The Europeans were concerned about the sale of arms and arms control. During the Iran-Contra Affair, the administration had to also deal with negotiations with Soviet Union on nuclear weapons (McCormick and Smith 1988)

The Contra Affair involved all American Allies including Saudi and Israel. The Iran Contra affair was more of an internal crisis than an external one, it was a systemic crisis one that had taken place before. It was a breaking down of the system of checks and balances, and the resurgence of the 'imperial presidency'. The Iran-Contra led to an extension and unprecedented levels of presidential secrecy, Congress was never kept in the loop and the executive went beyond the bounds of the law. The Affair exposed the two profound crises facing American government and society as it headed into the 21st century. First, institutionalized secrecy had eviscerated checks on executive power in foreign affairs. Second, these operations revealed a fundamental moral corruption in Washington's bureaucratic culture (Canham-Clyne 1992). In the aftermath, there was an overhaul of the national security decision making process (Ghio 1992).

Reagan, in the case of the Iran Contra Affair displayed dominance over foreign policy in respect with the battle against Congress. First, the president was victorious as the executive branch controlled the situation in matters of foreign affairs and had often done so by circumventing the laws that were used to curtail the power of the executive. Second, Congress usually complied with or acquiesced in favor of the President. Third, the federal courts have usually tolerated presidential acts, the courts have very often affirmed to presidential authority. The combination of these factors has played a role in executive dominance in foreign affairs. In the end, an unholy synergy between the executive branch's international incentives and domestic ability to act drove it toward the Iran-Contra Affair (Koh 1988).

It was the NSC and more specifically the NSC Advisor that played a determining role in the Iran Contra Affair. Within the Reagan administration there were many like Schultz who saw Iran as a buffer with the Soviets. The lack of presidential control over disputes among senior aides in the Reagan administration created a gap in the decision-making process. Thus, the rivalry between the Advisor and Secretary of State continued with McFarlane undercutting Schultz. Reagan approval of the TOW shipments which violated the Arms Export Control Act (AECA). This Act was an important component of U.S. military sales. It barred the trader of weapons weapons by the U.S. countries engaged or supported terrorist activities (Byrne 2014).

The president in the matter of Iran, though well aware of the sale of arms to Iran and was able to navigate his way to avoid congressional review until the Tower Commission. The result of this was because of the NSC and the limited number of advisors and their loyalty to the presidency. In the matter of Iran Contra affair, Reagan found himself having to deal with the freeing of hostages channelled by National Security Advisor Poindexter, NSC staffer Oliver North, CIA Director William Casey and others. He like his predecessors found himself pushed and pulled by various actors and agendas, however the president decided to press ahead with the sale of arms to Iran (initially through the Israelis and, from the winter of 1985 to the autumn of 1986, to Iran directly)

George H. W. Bush & Iran

George W. Bush wrote about his father stating ,

*“The problem ....is that he thinks you can solve a problems one at a time with good character good judgment and a good team ....I understand that you need ideas and principles – based on beliefs”.*

In dealing with Iran, Bush attempted a rapprochement, in an effort to improve relations. This was specially geared towards the release of hostages in Lebanon and Iran's ties with Hezbollah. The First Gulf War, also played a role in U.S. policy towards Iran. The other factor that played a defining role was congressional assertion. When Bush was elected to the presidency, in spite of his ties to the Washington community, the Democratic controlled Congress played an assertive role to the extent that members of the administration felt as though Congress began to over exert itself.

In his inaugural, he signaled his policy towards Iran this was supplemented with NSD 28 which outlined the administration's hopes of a change in foreign policy towards Iran. Bush's policy rested on 'good will begets good will'. In his inaugural address, attempted at break with the past. The death of Khomeini and the ascendancy of Rafsanjani to the presidency provided an opportunity. There were a series of events that made his rapprochement difficult. This was seen with the fatwa issued by Khomeini calling for the death of author Salman Rushdie for his controversial book *The Satanic Verses* (Dowd 1989).

Khomeini's death signaled a new Iranian leadership, free from the previous course and one that could set a new course; a more moderate, pragmatic course of action , one that included a rapprochement with the West. Washington hoped that Rafsanjani would be able to marginalize hard-liners. Bush attempted to back away from the traditional approach towards Iran, however at the same time had to contend with factions within that made Iran's connection with terrorist organizations problematic. In mid-August, the president contacted UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in an attempt to open a

channel to Rafsanjani via Scowcroft. Bush's reciprocal gestures were directed towards easing relations and freeing the hostages. Baker, argued that the U.S. had limited options as a result of the regional environment. The president, worried that high-profile terrorism would jeopardize efforts towards a rehabilitation of Iran's image. In 1992, the EU followed a policy of "critical dialogue" in an effort to strengthen the moderates factions within Iran. However, the EU moves were perpetrated by strengthening trade with Tehran. Congress asserted itself in legislation aimed at controlling the transfer of military technology. This resulted in John McCain's Non-Proliferation and Arms Transfer Control Act of 1991 and John Glenn's Omnibus Nuclear Proliferation Act of December 1991. Congress was insistent on a tough containment policy that put an end to Bush's outreach to Tehran (Seliktar 2012).

During the early parts of the Bush administration, NSD 26, stated a preparation to normalize relations with Iran. However, there were conditions; an end of support for terrorism and aid in releasing U.S. hostages as well as "curbing subversive activities" to name a few. It also proposed a continuation of a dialogue between the two countries (NSD 26 1989).

In addition to this, the U.S. relaxed trade restrictions on Iran. The U.S. withdrew some of the trade restrictions and agreed to unfreeze \$600 million of Iran's assets. In late 1991, Bush allowed a limited amount of Iranian crude oil into the U.S. The Administration also relaxed foreign exchange and customs restrictions on exporters as well as reduced income taxes for non-oil exporters (Hooman 1999).

The White House saw this outreach as a win-win situation but selling it to the domestic public would be a difficult task. American companies were interested in doing business with Iran but there was discord within the administration as well this this was especially seen with Dick Cheney fell in this category (Seliktar 2012).

However in spite of the change both in U.S. and Iranian leadership, the administration was unable to sustain engagement with Iran which was either due to U.S.

internal politics, external environment as well as Iran's behavior and posturing in the region. In spite of the president's best efforts to move away from containment, nevertheless containment became the order of the day.

### *Bill Clinton and the policy of Dual Containment*

During Clinton's first term, his middle east policy, was dominated by the Arab Israel peace process. With respect to Iran and Iraq Clinton followed a policy of Dual Containment. It was a strategy that focussed on the policy of neglect, wherein the U.S. did not want to act, therefore containment was considered the better option. It was to pay lip service to the U.S. gulf allies but however it created a deal of misunderstanding. Warren Christopher as Secretary of State ensured that any kind of engagement with Iran was off the table. Christopher attitude towards Iran could be one of the reasons for shaping the Clinton administration's policy towards Iran (Ansari 2006).

The policy of dual containment came out of an interagency working group headed by Martin Indyk, he was the main proponent of the policy of dual containment, under the leadership of Anthony Lake. He was considered the principal architect of this policy. Originally the terms used were aggressive containment, active containment parallel containment. Thus, it meant a containment of both rather than a reliance on one. Lake and Indyk's strategy of containment was a preservation of US security interest in the Persian Gulf, given the military power of these they could not mount a challenge against the onslaught of American diplomacy or rather US strategic policy. But for this to work regional adherence was required. The strategy differed for both Iran and Iraq. The Clinton administration was also consumed in dealing with the Oslo Peace Process which made prioritizing Iran and Iraq problem (Edwards).

Clinton actively pursued the policy of dual containment in his first term. The strategy required a larger presence of the U.S. navy in the Persian gulf. However, dual containment underwent a change in his second term engagement. A reason for this was a change in leadership, with Khatami. Khatami also wanted to improve relations with the

Arab world, in doing so he sent his foreign minister on a good will tour to achieve this end as well as reached out to the GCC. Khatami's overtures to the US were what he called limited rapprochement (Robert 1999) Therefore, the Dual containment required multilateralism, therefore the Administration had to persuade other countries not to engage with Iran. It aimed at securing allies like Saudi and the smaller gulf monarchies from outside threats. The flaw in dual containment was the contention that Iran and Iraq were to be contained simultaneously (Gause 1994)

There were voices within the U.S. calling for improving relations with Iran. The balance of containing and engaging was accomplished with the 1995 EO that banned U.S. companies from investing in Iran's oil industry. Thus U.S. firms were forced to cancel contracts. In 1996, Clinton went further and signed a bill put forth by the Republicans, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA). It further imposed sanctions against foreign firms that invested more than \$40 million in Iran's oil and gas industry (Freedman 1999). The majilis attempted to stymie efforts to improve relations with the US, the Republicans for their part also attempted and were successful in derailing the rapprochement. The major issues such as support for terrorist organizations, sabotaging the Arab-Israel peace process still existed. The US had to deal with the conservatives in Iran a powerful force to reckon with and any US engagement would create a reverse effect which would be detrimental to any kind of reform (Bakhash 1997)

The Clinton years also witnessed Congressional reassertion, the administration fought congressional pressure pertaining to ILSA and attempted to change the focus from trade to investment. In addition to Congress, Clinton had to contend with lobbies in making his decisions. There were two lobbies; the pro Iran lobby and the anti Iran lobby. The pro-Iran lobby were led by American Iranian Council under the leadership of Cyrus Vance supported the improvement of ties between the two, the key to this was the Khatami. The pro-Iran lobby found that their engagement and rapprochement were thwarted by AIPC and the pro-Israeli groups. As Clinton reassessed his policy towards Iran, members of the administration were influenced by the Iran lobby this included



Secretary of State Madeline Albright. One of the steps taken by the administration was an official apology for US interference in the 1953 Mossadegh coup. The members of the administration believed that this statement would aid in cultivating a new dialogue between the two. Members of the administration blamed the Republicans and the lobbies for the problems in re-engaging with Iran. Congress was more influenced by the pro-Israel lobbies like AIPAC. They undermined the presidency and his policy towards engaging with Iran. In September 1997 Congress introduced a bipartisan bill, the Iran Missile Proliferation Sanction Act, Clinton vetoed the bill. In 2000, Congress passed the Trafficking and Violence Protection Act on October 11, 2000. In addition to these , Congress was apprehensive over Iran's nuclear program and was willing to battle the president on this front. The Administration's strategy of engagement received support from the pro-Iran lobby. The American Iranian Council and the National Iranian American Council took front stage. They were joined by oil and gas corporations that were interested in investing in Iran, this included Chevron, Conoco, Amoco, and Penzoil-Quaker State. The corporate lobby hired senior foreign policy officials to do the bidding for them. Officials like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, Dick Cheney, John Sununu, Howard Baker and Lloyd Bentsen in an effort to promote the easing of sanctions on Iran (Seliktar 2012).

Clinton's policy towards Iran rested at first on a policy of dual containment, however this was altered to a policy of engagement but few gains were made as a result of the domestic environment. In the final analysis the Clinton administration can be credited with a rapprochement towards Iran.

#### *Bush and Iran: From Axis of Evil to Negotiations*

The Bush presidency and his leadership in matters pertaining to foreign policy can be divided into two parts that is the pre-9/11 and the post 9/11 years. Prior to 9/11 Bush focused on a laundry list of domestic issues.. As president and as a result of the international crisis faced by the president, bipartisan support in matters pertaining to

foreign policy was easy to gain, it is commonly called the ‘rally effect’. In fact the president was able to overwhelmingly get the support of Democrats this was especially true with the Authorization of (AUMF) in Afghanistan and Iraq (Gregg and Rozell 2004).

9/11 offered an opportunity with Iran. The Iranians expressed their sympathy over the attacks that was greeted with a degree of skepticism in the US. There was in fact a larger outpouring of sympathy in Iran than amongst many U.S. allies in the region. The timing of the revelation – especially as the tragedy of 9/11 initially held the possibility of a thaw between the two countries. The leadership in Tehran protested its innocence vehemently and condemned the attacks. Along with official condolences, the government of Mohammad Khatami, tried to persuade hard-line elements to limited cooperation with the U.S. The U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, provided an opening for Tehran to improve relations. This came in the form of intelligence sharing on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in an effort to aid to help find and recover coalition forces on the Iranian-Afghan border. It also included providing support to the Northern Alliance (with whom the Iran had extensive influence). The Iranian assistance was not insignificant, Khatami was able to deliver because Reformists and pragmatists within Iran supported these intertwining interests. Khatami found it difficult to convince hardliners in Iran. The same was true with Republicans in the U.S. the idea of tentative detente or some sort of rapprochement was viewed skeptically. There was an additional problem of the presence of Al Qaeda members in Iran which added to U.S. suspicions (Ansari 2006).

All hopes of a thaw in the relations were obliterated with the 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush geared the country for war with Iraq, however looking in the context of Iran, it was a major deviation in policy. The speech commonly known as the ‘Axis of Evil speech’, targeted Iraq, Iran and North Korea. He stated,

*"We must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world...The United*

*States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons" (Bush 2002).*

These countries were assumed to possess WMDs and nuclear arsenal. The use of the phrase axis of evil, was a restructuring of the phrase war on terror. In using the theological motif 'axis of evil', had political reverberations were felt in Tehran. The Iranian hardliners, sought to exploit the event by imposing a state of emergency. Despite this, there were a number of initiatives underway such as the “grand bargain” with the U.S. This was an attempt by the realists within the Iranian establishment to broker a deal with like-minded realists in the U.S. The problem, was getting hardliners on board which proved to be difficult (Ansari 2006).

The strategic dynamic, was to ensure and strengthen U.S. presence in the Gulf thus ensuring a check on Iran. Overthrowing Saddam and the setting up a democratic government in Iraq (bordering Iran) would also mean strengthening democracy in the region. However, policy makers failed to take into account that it strengthened the Shia's in Iraq that supported Iran thus providing Iran with the opportunity to get involved in Iraq (Seliktar 2012).

There were some within the administration like Colin Powell that supported the idea for a reset in relations between the two. However in the beginning, the course of action towards Iran was one of indecisiveness. This was a result of career diplomats like Richard Haas that advised a reorientation in U.S. policy towards sanctions like ILSA were ineffective. Dick Cheney's Energy Commission advised a review of the sanctions. Rapprochement towards Iran after 9/11 was spearheaded by the State Department under Colin Powell and other lower ranking officials within the department. Iran's cooperation in the war against Afghanistan, included an agreement to close the borders to al Qaeda and Taliban who attempted to flee Afghanistan. There were some like Richard Armitage within the administration who were not content with Iran's role. Iran played a significant role at the Bonn Conference which aided in setting up an interim government in

Afghanistan. Paul Wolfowitz and NSC Advisor Steven Hadley were against a rapprochement with Iran (Murphy 2009)

The revelations of Iran's secret nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak in the aftermath of the State of the Union Address worsened the situation. In 2003, Iran took a step forward and put forth the grand bargain, it dealt with a number of aspects including Iran's nuclear program as well as posturing in the region. The State Department continued to support this however, there were others within the administration that were opposed to it. The Iranian offer coincided with the peak of U.S. power in the region. Therefore the administration was not inclined to negotiate. Hawks in the Pentagon and Vice President Dick Cheney's office interpreted the Iranian proposal as a sign of weakness. Washington did not respond to the Iranian offer of mutual respect. In 2003 while Iran was in the process of agreeing to the Additional Protocol of the NPT, this permitted the IAEA extensive inspection. However, the EU+3 failed to follow through with this a reason being a lack of U.S. support. In 2005, the Iranians put forward another proposal, however as the EU+3 were considering, Ahmadinejad won the election in Iran. Thus bringing an air of conservatism to policy making. The Iranian leadership were also well aware of the fact that nuclear issues would be at the top of the agenda, and would require a great deal of hard nose bargaining in an effort to reach an agreement. The administration had to decide whether to contain, isolate or engage with Iran. However isolation had proven to be a failure as over the last two decades Iran was isolated, this did not have any tangible results. However engagement would also be tricky as there were domestic and international constraints (Daaler and Lindsay 2003)

In the matter of negotiating with Iran, the President deferred and relied on the EU3 France, Germany Italy. The foreign ministers from the three countries met in Tehran in an effort to negotiate the Tehran Declaration and the Additional Protocol but Natanz jeopardized the discussions. Throughout 2004, while Iran toggled between continuing enrichment versus suspension, it was the EU+3 and IAEA threat aided in the negotiation process. The end result was the Paris Agreement, the terms of the agreement included a

pledge to temporarily suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, and IAEA verification. In return for suspension of activities, the EU+3 committed to support Iran at the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Crail and Sobrado 2004) However as these negotiations were ongoing, the EU-U.S. disagreed on the US role in the negotiations process. The ironies were skeptical about U.S. involvement (Kerr 2005)

In 2004, the Administration signaled a change in its attitude towards Iran. Firstly, the Administration had secured a second term and was able to act boldly on controversial issues. Secondly there was hope with a change in leadership in Iran, however this change made negotiations far more difficult. The other factor was the EU negotiations had not paid off and an alternate plan was required. However, Rice was skeptical. Ahmadinejad was against the Paris Agreement, the U.S. had an all options on the table policy. As a gesture of good faith and in an effort to show the Iranian leadership that the U.S. was ready to negotiate, the U.S. administration took various steps in relation to the MEK. The U.S. attacked MEK bases in Iraq. In March 2005, the U.S. promised not to block Iran's entry in to the WTO. Bush lacked clear strategy, the Administration could not treat Iran as they did Iraq Military action was thus a last resort. But at the same time there were members within the administration that toiled with the idea of regime change. At the same time Congress drew up sanctions against Iran. This was true of the UNSC as well.

In 2006, Ahmadinejad began to restart Iran's nuclear activities in 2006. In 2006 , the U.S. formally agreed to join the EU+3 thus the P5+1 came into existence with Russia and China joining in. They offered similar proposals to Iran. The P5+1 described their negotiations with Tehran a "dual track strategy". The second track consisted of sanctions on Iran and demanded suspension of all uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, as well as construction of a heavy water reactor. UNSC Resolution adopted Resolution 1737 in December 2006, Resolution 1747 in March 2007, Resolution 1803 in March 2008 (UN Res 1737 2006; UN Res 1803 2008).

Throughout the Bush administration, the war drums for regime change were sounded not only by the public but by Congress as well as unofficially by members of the

administration. During the six years, the Republicans controlled Congress, legislation dealt with not only Iran's nuclear program but other aspects as well, for instance regime change. The nature of the legislation changed when the Democrats took of Congress in 2007, legislation focused more on sanctions and Iran's nuclear program. During the 107th Congress, Rep Elliot Engel (D-NY) put forth H.Con Res 29 which expressed the sense of the Congress regarding the conviction of ten members of Iran's Jewish community (H.Con.Res.29 2001). The Republican-controlled Congress also extended ILSA. The bill amended the previous law from \$40 million to \$20 million on the amount when it came to investment in petroleum resources for the president to impose sanctions. The amendment was signed into law by the president (H.R.1954 2001).

For its part, Congress introduced bills in an effort to isolate and contain Iran. The House by a 408 to 6 vote approved of the The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act. A second bill authored by Rep. Ileana Lehtinen (R-FL), amended the sanctions on Tehran in an effort to close the gap on "foreign subsidiaries of U.S. parent companies dealing with trade and investment". The House approved the bill by a vote of 415 to 11. In the Senate, Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR.) incorporated similar provisions concerning foreign subsidiaries into the broader Iran Counter Proliferation Act. This bill was aimed at placing a freeze on almost all trade between the U.S. and Iran. The bill barred the executive branch from facilitating Iran's accession to the WTO (Bosley 2007). In addition to these bills, Sen Van Bayh (D-IN) proposed 'a resolution responding to the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program' (S.Res 351 2006).

The House put forth a sense of the House when it came to the United Nations Security Council should sanction Iran for its noncompliance with the NPT. S.1082 was introduced by Senator Sam Brownback, it allocated funds in an effort to hold an "internationally-monitored democratic referendum in Iran". A House bill (H.R. 2466), introduced by Representative Brad Sherman, contained similar provisions as well as added sections that reimposed sanctions on import of luxury goods from Iran. Elements of these bills were incorporated into the House-passed version of the FY2004 foreign

relations authorization bill (H.R. 1950). In July 2004, Senator Rick Santorum introduced S. 2681, expressing the sense of congress on regime change and authorizing \$10 million in U.S. assistance to pro-democracy groups. Similar legislation (H.R. 5193) was introduced by Representative Ros Lehtinen on September 30, 2004, but it did not stipulate a specific level of U.S. assistance to pro-democracy groups (Katzman 2005).

The administration also supported broadcasting agencies in an effort to promote US ideals and values especially democracy. This was seen in December 2002, the “*Radio Farda* (“Tomorrow” in Farsi)”, which broadcasted 24hours, at a cost of approximately \$18 million per year. In addition to this, the U.S. sponsored television broadcast by “Voice of America (VOA)”, which began July 3, 2003. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002, President Bush issued a statement in support of democratic reforms. However, the rhetoric of regime change within the Administration was put on the back burner in 2003 as a result of the war in Iraq. Publicly, members of the administration denounced regime in the hearings before Congress. It was also during the second term that the administration’s rhetoric signaled regime change. This was especially true during Rice’s visit to Europe in early February 2005, where she reiterated the “unelected” leadership in Iran. This was true in the hearings with Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns as well (Katzman 2005)

In 2007, the issues pertaining to the rhetoric towards Iran began to change which in some respects set the ground work for the Obama administration. Though these pieces of legislation did not pass it displayed the manner and the direction in which Congress was moving under Democratic control. This included legislation that revolved around the halting of the sale of parts for aircrafts like the F-14 fighter jets through the DOD as well as legislation proposed by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) on Stop Arming Iran Act (S.387 2007)

In an effort to understand George Bush’s leadership style in matters pertaining to Iran in building a consensus for his policy towards Iran. There were a number of factors that influenced this, the international allies in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion began

attempts at engage with Iran therefore building a consensus to contain Iran was difficult but not impossible. The revelations of the nuclear program made it far more difficult. Washington's unwillingness to participate in the early nuclear diplomacy with Tehran created an impediment to the Bush administration. This represented a reversal of prior policy, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, which had been consistently displayed a readiness to talk to Tehran. There was a focus on the "Freedom Agenda," the euphoria within the U.S. over the early military success to oust Saddam gave the administration and the president the confidence to do so. In 2006, the U.S. joined the EU in engaging with Iran albeit grudgingly. Starting in 2006, the U.S. together with the UN was able to pass four sets of resolutions that sanctioned Iran (Maloney 2011).

Therefore U.S. policy differed starkly prior to the Revolution and in the aftermath of the Revolution . However it is clear that successive president's played an important role in framing U.S. policy towards Iran.



## Chapter III

### FROM “YES WE CAN” TO “YES HE DID”

#### Barack Obama’s Policy Towards Iran

*“To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist”*

*- Barack H. Obama ,  
44th president of the United States of America*

## **Introduction**

The previous chapters have addressed the factors that constrain and enable presidential leadership as well as as a historical analysis US-Iran relations. In doing so it has set the stage for the Obama presidency and his negotiations with Iran.

This chapter seeks to address the questions pertaining to presidential leadership in the making of foreign policy under the Obama administration with respect to Iran and the JCPOA negotiations. The reassertion of presidential leadership under the Obama years is questionable at best given the state of affairs, in terms of Libya, Syria, the rise growth and spread of the Islamic State (IS). However, in the matter of Iran, the case was different.

The Iran deal is considered the crown on which rests Obama's legacy. Thus, in light of this it is important to understand the factors both internal and external that shaped Obama's strategy towards Iran.

## **The Election of Barak Obama**

The election of Barack Obama, the amateur politician grappled the world and ignited America. From humble beginnings to Presidency. It was right in 2002 as State Senator, Obama condemned the Bush Presidency and its started to invade Iraq. Throughout the Bush presidency, Obama kept up his anti-Iraq war ideals, stating that it was the 'wrong war'. It was his 2004 Democratic National Convention (DNC) speech that put him on the political roadmap to the White House. Though the 2004 DNC was John Kerry's moment to shine, after the dust settled and Bush won a song term, it was the Democrats who remembered the oratory of Barack Obama. As Senator in 2005, Obama continued his condemnation of the Iraq War. In the Senate, Obama was under the tutelage of Joe Biden and John Kerry as well as Edward Kennedy, he also worked with Republicans like John McCain and Richard Lugar thus displaying this ability to reach across the aisle. As the the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan waged on and became more and more unpopular. The 2006 election displayed an anti Iraq midterm rather than a 'blue

wave'. In 2008, he announced his candidacy for the presidency. His campaign mirrored Robert Kennedy's campaign announcement wherein he stated "I do not seek the presidency to oppose any man but to propose policy". Obama's campaign published a agenda that mirrored the Democrats in the form of *Change we Can Believe In: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise* (2008).

The 2008 election was like many elections in the past fought on change vs. continuity. Barack Obama distinguished himself from Democratic as well as Republican contenders in the manner of change. Obama used the narrative of 'change' to invoke a historical context. Clinton and McCain invoked their experience in US politics and Obama chose the route of change. As his inexperience would not help his political standing. When he launched his campaign from Springfield it was no accident that it was Abraham Lincoln's home town, thus he fashioned himself as Lincoln. Throughout the election, Obama reminded the nation that the 'standard' of the presidency had to be raised. He also appreciated presidents who had stood up for their beliefs and changed the course of U.S. politics, thus making a historical connection with the past. In much the same way as Kennedy did in his Pulitzer Prize winning book *Profiles in Courage*.

Obama was also considered 'cosmopolitan,' and his Democratic and Republican rivals were characteristically American 'provincials.' Their residences in white middle class areas failed to give them the political and social perspective that an African-American with a Kenyan father who was born in Hawaii (Graubard 2004).

On a personal note, Obama was charismatic much in the same way his Democratic predecessors, he touched the heart strings of America promised to end the Iraq war and focus on Afghanistan, to bring healthcare to every American and so on. Obama realized that there was a need for an overhaul of U.S. foreign policy. The election results were a clear display that "change had come to America". Traditional red states had turned blue, the election was a referendum against the Republican party and their president. Obama won 365 electoral votes versus John McCain's 173, Obama also won the popular vote. Voter turn out had reached one of the highest levels. Obama campaign

demonstrated high voter turnout . The exit polls displayed 66% of Hispanics voted and 95% African Americans voted. The percentage of voter turnout was 62.3% (Barr 2008).

Barack Obama gained the support of more voters in the ideological “middle” than either John Kerry or Al Gore before him. He won at least half the votes of independents (52% vs. 49% for Kerry), suburban voters (50% vs. 47% for Kerry). The overwhelming backing of younger voters was a critical factor in Obama’s victory. Obama drew two-thirds (66%) of the vote among those younger than age 30. He won a huge majority among those with low or moderate annual incomes (60%). However, he struggled to win Hispanic votes during Democratic primaries in California and other states, but on election night he drew two-thirds (66%) of the Hispanic vote, a 13-point improvement over Kerry in 2004. Towards the end of the election, the economy more than foreign policy became the dominant issue (Rosentiel 2008).

Obama’s popularity in some respect was transferred to his party in Congress. However the coattail effect that had been witnessed during the Cold War were significantly shorter. This was despite his popularity, the Democrats did take over both Houses of Congress. The coattail effect was not attributed to the main for their significant victory. The image of the Democratic Party had improved since 2007, but Congress was still considered unpopular, in contrast the view of the Republicans continued to plummet. Conservatives also felt less favorable about their party (PEW June 3rd 2008).

Obama’s appeals were engineered to not only unite Democrats but to cross party lines. Obama ran on the notion of a post-partisan president. In doing so he campaigned as an American not as an African American. However, many of the issues Obama ran on were dominated by Democrats and were very much part of the Democratic Party platform this included federal involvement in healthcare, environment, education. In the 2008 election, there was a paradigm shift among voters, 9% of the Republicans voted for Obama this number fell to 6% in the 2012 election. Among the conservatives, Obama won 17% of the conservative vote in 2009 and 20% in 2012. In the 2008 election, Obama was able to change the political map this was especially with his victories in North

Carolina, Virginia, Florida (a swing state), Colorado (270 to win 2008). In 2012, the electoral map changed in favor of the Republican but nevertheless Obama won 332 electoral votes (270 to win 2012). He made every endeavor to reach across the aisle.

Obama inherited a sleuth of problems both on the domestic as well as on the foreign policy side. On the foreign policy he had to address questions pertaining to the increase in troops, in Iraq it was the de-escalation of troops and Iran was on the the cusp of reaching the nuclear threshold to acquire a bomb. These issues were especially discussed at the first meeting between Obama and McConnell (Sanger 2009 ) In addition to this, the U.S. standing in the global community was low and Obama had to work towards building trust among allies.

### **Obama's Team of Advisors**

Much of Obama's organization of the White House and the manner in which policy was made depended on two major factors: his personality and characteristics as well as the team he chose to help in the decision making process. His legal training gave him the unique ability to rationally think through issues and make his arguments. He also tried to remain unattached and to at the issue objectively. However, this was not always the case especially on one particular issue wherein his emotions were on display, this was in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shooting. The lack of an emotional display led many to draw conclusions that the president lacked empathy. In the White House he encouraged a great deal of debate and discussion as policy making requires a number of perspectives which Obama supported. Obama was not afraid to make difficult decisions, however he was afraid of making mistakes which corresponded to his cautious style of making policy. In his temperament, he was mostly cool headed and seldom impatient. In attacking his adversaries, he did not demonize them as his predecessors had done but rather attempted to use facts against them (Wayne 2011).

In Chapter I, the thesis listed out various leadership styles, Obama's style was in tune with many of his predecessors that is a combination of styles. His leadership style

was in tune with a delegator as well as the director wherein the president controlled a great deal of the decision making as well as he was able to delegate to competent people within this team. These included both within the White House and the other departments as well that negotiated on behalf with his authority. This was especially seen in the negotiations with Iran. His decision making style was at times framed as a collegial style wherein the opinions and understandings of the experts were taken into consideration. This meant there was a great deal of debate within the Obama administration. Obama also did not want to make policy as a knee-jerk reaction that involved a retaliatory strike that was not well thought off. Therefore, though the decisions took time to come to fruition, there was a great deal of discussions (Wayne 2011).

From candidate to president, there was a marked departure in Obama's notion of Washington politics. This has been the case with his predecessors as well. His campaign, for one thing, was run like a prudent, savvy, hi-tech business. His campaign was a combination of strategic outreach that maximized the use of the internet to attract targeted demographic groups together with the ever-chanted mantra "Yes we can" built and held momentum. The White House, was more centralized, Obama had the ability to extend himself and lead from a wide range of behaviors that enabled him to ultimately win the election. While his opponents were calling attention to their well-honed strengths which was an important factor in an election but to some extent overplayed these traits. This was in terms of both Hillary Clinton – his democratic contender as well as McCain his Republican contender. Though Obama was attacked for his inexperience, he was able to use his judgement against his contenders . Obama honed in on his ability to reach a wider audience believed presidential candidate and they saw Obama was the best person to meet the diverse challenges of our time. There was a correlation between brain function and leadership ability. In this aspect, his interpersonal relationships were an important factor. From Obama 's perspective it reiterated the fact that he was open to varied view points though he might fundamentally disagree with them. He also attempted to act as a unifier which was to bring all the varied factions together. Obama was a mixture of both left brain than right brain. That is, he was more focussed on logic,

expression, order, and analysis. At the same time he was very much attuned to the realities of the present. Obama lead from right-brain vision, from a transformational perspective (Décosterd 2010).

Soon after the election, Obama hit the ground the running in organizing his White House in an effort to avoid the mistakes made by Clinton administration. The first order of business was selecting a chief of staff. Rahm Emmanuel was Obama's choice who was delegated the talk of picking members of his team. Most of the president's inner circle were made up of members who served on his campaign. The White House functioned on the basis of a combination of centralization as well as delegation. All or most polity specially emanated from the White House. The strong chief of staff controlled the process. The policy czars was a way in which policy was formatted. Theses czars were appointed by the president ,therefore the cabinet was not always involved in the process. They also resented the treatment by the chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, who was close to the president and had his ear, Emanuel also had ties on the Hill that was essential in passing Obama's legislative agenda. The policy czars were not a new phenomena, they were used by previous administrations in an effort to coordinate policy, they were mainly within the White House organizational structure. Obama 's inner circle included Tom Donilon, David Axelrod, Valerie Jarrett to name a few (Pfiffner 2013; Pfiffner 2011).

The centralized process, included his close advisors as well as multiple advocacy groups in policy deliberations. However, Eric Holder, Attorney General was promised broad discretionary powers in the prosecution of detainees, however in the end was forced to follow a cautious strategy. Obama's use of advocacy group were known for their careful and lengthy deliberations in an effort to acquire contrasting opinions. The advocacy process played an important role in decisions like troop increase in Afghanistan. The White House Staff as well played an important role in advising the president, this was especially true in the case of the detainees. The Staff advised against addressing contentious foreign policy issues such as the detainee that could negatively affect his domestic agenda and derail support on these issues. In the case of troop

increase, Obama had a more inclusive approach to the decision in comparison to Bush and used the multiple advocacy in the decision making process. Obama was criticized over his lengthy decision making process. He very often himself delved into the problem if he thought his advisors were misleading him (Pfiffner 2011).

The administration in fact was made up of a ‘team of rivals’ a term that was used to describe the Lincoln White House. Obama named Hilary Clinton, known for her hawkish stance on foreign policy as his first Secretary of State. In part Obama attempted to heal the rift within the party in the aftermath of the his victory over Clinton. Dennis Ross, was his special envoy to Iran and was perceived as a nod by the Israeli lobby for his tough stand on Iran. He in fact was the co-founder of the United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI), a bipartisan group dedicated to stopping Iran from attaining nuclear weapons. Ross and Clinton shared similar views. William Burns became the chief negotiator on the Iran deal together with NSA senior staff member; Puneet Talwar. Jake Sullivan was first the Director of Policy Planning at the State Department and worked closely with Hillary Clinton till 2013. Later, he became the NSC advisor to the Vice President and worked closely with Obama ’s inner circle on the Iran negotiations. Tom Donilon was Deputy National Security Advisor and the later became National Security Advisor after Jim Jones. As a result of Obama’s centralized leadership as well as the influence from his inner circle Jones as NSC advisor found it difficult to make in roads in the administration (Mann 2013).

During Obama’s second term, John Kerry was sworn in as Secretary of State (2013). Kerry prior to becoming the Secretary was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He was one of the few members of Congress that knew and was involved in the backchannel negotiation between the U.S., Oman and Iran. As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Kerry was well versed with U.S. involvement in the international community as well as the confirmation was a smooth process. Kerry was also respected as a U.S, diplomat by the international community. His views on foreign policy matched that of Obama’s unlike Clinton who held more hawkish



views. Despite his knowledge in matters pertaining to foreign policy, Kerry and Clinton both 'served at the pleasure of the president'. That is, Kerry was tasked with the job of bringing Obama's foreign policy vision - a "new era in American leadership" to fruition (The White House December 21 2012).

In December 2012, after the re-election, President Obama announced John Kerry, this was his attempt to revamp the administration. As Senator, Kerry had also served as an emissary for the Administration in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria and even Iran. President Obama's relations with both his secretaries of state differed. The Obama-Clinton team worked well in getting sanctions through the UN. However, Clinton preferred harder tactics on Iran rather than the Obama approach. The Obama-Kerry team worked well together especially when it came to Iran. Kerry through his dealings with the Omanis as well as the new leadership in Iran was able to make Obama's vision of a nuclear deal with Iran a reality (Spetalnick and Zakaria 2012).

Kerry was not Obama's first choice, Susan Rice withdrew from the nomination as a result of her controversial interview regarding the American Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans (Epstein 2012). Kerry in fact had earned his place as part of the Obama team in the aftermath of the backchannel with Iran, it was these contacts that would eventually lead to the deal.

During the administration, there were four secretaries of defense that served under Obama. The first being Robert Gates who was appointed by President Bush but continued to serve in the Obama administration 'at the pleasure of the president'. When Gates stepped down in 2011, the official reason was the mounting political pressure with the 2012 election. However, his retirement came at a crucial time when the U.S. were set to drawdown from Afghanistan. Gates presided over the Pentagon at a crucial time when there was a shift in focus from Iraq to Afghanistan. Though Gates's role in the both the wars and supervising U.S. withdrawal was important, he was not considered the inner circle in the Obama administration, he did share a good relationship with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (MacAskill 2010b). Following Gates's retirement Leon Panetta

became the Secretary, after his leadership as Director of the CIA and his provision of accurate intelligence for Operation Geronimo put him in a unique position with Obama. As Secretary of Defense Panetta had a great deal of complaints especially as he was on the outskirts of the decision making process. Very often most presidents would stick to close adviser. In his book *Worthy Fights* (2014), Panetta was brought in as Obama was well aware that the CIA had suffered from issues pertaining to credibility and there was a need to regain it. Chuck Hagel became Obama's third Secretary of Defense, in the aftermath of his resignation in an interview, Hagel complained about the micromanagement under the Obama administration as well as the influence of others. Obama was also criticized over the time he took to decide on troop increase in Afghanistan as well as his unclear policy towards the ISIS. One of the reasons for President Obama accepting Hagel's resignation was the need for a change in policy during the last two years of his administration. Ash Carter, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, became Secretary after Hagel's departure. The relations between Obama and his secretaries of Defense were uneasy.

In the case of Iran, it was, State Department, Department of Energy and the White House who worked in collaboration with the P5 and Omanis to bring the Iranians to the negotiating table. Ben Rhodes and Dennis McDonough were called the "Obamians". They were part of the core foreign policy team of Obama. They had been part of the foreign policy making process during the Clinton administration. They were internationalist but had served in Congress or academia not in the executive. McDonough was part of Hillary Clinton's point person on Iran up until he became the second in command at the NSC. The views of Obama's inner circle were in fact a mitigation of Obama's own views (Mann 2012). Jake Sullivan, is very often called the architect of the Iran Deal. Dennis Ross was negotiator as well as adviser on Iran. Obama's inner circle represented a relatively youthful, politically attuned side of Barack Obama's foreign policy (Mann 2012).

Under George W. Bush, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN was stripped of its cabinet level position, Obama in restoring the position to a cabinet level one, sent a strong signal to the international community over his approach towards foreign policy that being multilateralism vs unilateralism. Ambassador Susan Rice who had worked for the Clinton administration was his first ambassador followed by Samantha Powers. Susan Rice's task was an uphill battle as she attempted to convince the international community that it was not business as usual, she was tasked with the job of restoring America's position at the UN. In addition to this, she had to assemble the votes in the UN to impose sanctions on Iran (2010). Susan Rice later went on to become Obama's NSC Advisor. Powers worked on assembling the coalition against IS. Her work on the Balkans in the 1990s with respect to genocide as well as her human rights policy was a driving factor for Obama's selection of her (Mann 2012). Obama's inner circle were less concerned about the practice details and were more focussed on the ideals, the president for his part leaned on them to a large extent.

In an effort for Obama's policy towards Iran to work, the international community as well as Obama's allies within the U.S. were required to get on board. This meant that the P5 nations would also have to support Obama's policy Obama's strategy hinged on the members of his administration and support for his engagement strategy.

### **Foreign Policy Beliefs that Shaped a Presidency: Presidential Leadership and Foreign Policy**

In understanding Obama's leadership, questions were raised as to whether he was a transformational or transactional leader. Transformational leadership occurs when new interests come up, when institutional relationships are realigned and rearranged to support them and when the government priorities change. Presidents like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, FDR, Ronald Reagan are all considered transformational leaders. Transformational leaders are sometimes known as reconstructive leaders. Obama to a great extent altered national politics he was able to shift the conflict so that government

was understood differently. He aligned himself with Reagan rather than Clinton the former considered transformational leader. Like reconstructive leaders, Obama attempted to move away from the political dispensation of the time and move towards a 'new order' rather than the old order. Obama's first months in office echoed transformational leadership. However, there are some who argue that Obama was obsessed with the idea of one America and was forced to relinquish to partisan control. Though transformational leaders set policies that would reach across the aisle, they portray themselves in terms of a unifier this seemed to fall within this purview. However, the test to Obama's reconstruction came after the 2010 midterm election. The key to reconstructive leadership was the ability to form new alliances and realign the political landscape , to a certain extent Obama was able to do this but his success is questionable. Obama 's failure was of display when it came to the opposition to reform the U.S. government in face of seasoned and stalwart politicians. But in some respects it seems as though American presidents have set aside transformational leadership and have embraced more progressive leadership (Skowronek 2010).

Obama propelled the idea of a 'post partisan presidency'. With his relatively progressive bend of politics, he rejected in theory of partisanship in domestic and foreign policy. But, the reality was very different. Obama attempted to reach out to independents and Republicans alike however his Recovery package was not supported by a single Republican in the House vote and in the Senate only 3 Republicans voted in favor of it. With this as a measure of defeat, Obama focused on policies that pleased his liberal base rather than reach a bipartisan consensus. This included retreating from Iraq (which was also a campaign promise) , shutting down Guantanamo and negotiating with Iran. But Obama was a 'hawk' when to came to Afghanistan, 'the right war' as he mentioned during the campaign. In order to please the more conservative base, he kept Robert Gates on as Secretary of Defense, but that was more to maintain stability as well as to maintain some resemblance of continuity in the decision making process. He also kept Mike Mullen the JCS, Gen. Petraeus, Gen. Douglas Lute as White House co-ordinator for Afghanistan and Pakistan. In matters of foreign policy he expanded the use of drones in

comparison to Bush. Obama like Bush before him adopted the strategy of the ‘surge’ in Afghanistan, however though this was criticized by many, it was very much in tune with his campaign rhetoric of focusing more on Afghanistan than Iraq. Obama’s approach towards Afghanistan infuriated many Democrats, but Republicans tended to offer greater support. By the time the 2010 midterm election came around, Obama was viewed more favorably by Democrats than Republicans thus cementing the partisan divide and dashing the hopes for a post partisan presidency. Obama’s style was more in line with the administrative presidency rather than the executive centered presidency. Though Obama signed a number of executive orders in the same way that his predecessors did, Obama showed a greater willingness to work with Congress in comparison to Reagan. His presidency aimed at the resurrection of agencies and the role they played in the foreign policy process, revival bureaucratic autonomy. However this was not always visible. Obama’s progressive leadership was an attempt to go against the aggrandizement of the executive. Though this was achieved, Obama also used the full force of the executive to get his agenda passed (Milkis and Nelson 2012).

Obama was also considered a good delegator, who had hired competent and capable individuals. However the vision and implement style of leadership also seemed appropriate especially when it came to healthcare reform. Therefore, for Obama his leadership style tended to be based on a situational perspective. Obama’s foreign policy ideals have been misinterpreted as diminished or dismantling of US.. leadership around the world. In fact, he called for “visionary leadership” to restore and renew American leadership one based on national security intertwined with U.S. national security (Dueck 2015). Therefore his leadership was complex as he used an array of styles depending on the issue as well as its importance on his agenda together with the political environment.

A president’s leadership also lies in his ability to persuade, the power of persuasion is an important tool at the president’s disposal. It is a crucial element to political survival of the executive. Neustadt argued that the president had to persuade his constituencies which means his domestic base as well as the political environment. Persuasion is a critical

challenge to a president, though the modern presidency seems to have greater power and opportunity at its disposal power of persuasion is still a major factor. The powers of the president sometime replicate what Fred Greenstein called a 'double edged sword'. In the area of persuasion, Obama had to time and again persuade his cabinet in order to achieve consensus in foreign policy. The building of consensus in the White House which in addition to the powers of the president aided the policy making process. This was especially true when it came to the decision go going after Osama Bin Laden. In orchestrating Operation Geronimo, he had to persuade the then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in the decision to draw up plans and was aided by CIA Director Leon Panetta . When it came to the enforcement of the 'no-fly zone' in Syria in August 2013, he was unable to do so as he was unable to get a consensus within Congress (Snell 2015)

President Obama unlike his democratic predecessors had a unique vision for U.S. foreign policy, one that avoided focus on American exceptionalism and extending an unclenched fist towards adversarial nations. In addition tooth's it focussed on multilateralism vs unilateralism. The vision for the 21st century resembled some form of liberal internationalism propagated by FDR but without American exceptionalism. This would be based on 'smart power', forging of new alliances, and an expansion of the idea of security . This was to be coupled with deep knowledge of cultures which went to the heart of Obama's cosmopolitan nature (America from the outside). Obama had the potential to to renew America's foreign policy in the Post American century (Pedersen 2009). The Democrats in the past have focussed more on domestic policy rather than issues pertaining to national security which is considered the domain of the Republicans. The last campaign wherein a Democrat made foreign policy the hallmark of the campaign was the Robert Kennedy (1968). Kennedy like Obama in 2008 was running on an unpopular foreign policy and pledged to change the course of U.S. foreign policy. Obama capitalized on the lack of trust among voters towards the GOP to win the election. Democrats since Vietnam have been tagged as 'doves' and lacked the guts to act on the international stage. They have been associated more with human security than traditional issues pertaining to security. Democrats have a different foreign policy agenda one that

did not focus on democracy promotion. They have been more in favor of multilateralism versus unilateralism, therefore they were more supportive of the UN and NATO (Beinart 2007).

In the *Change We Can Believe In: Barack Obama's Plan to Renew America's Promise* (2008) the focus was on a responsible way to end the war in Iraq and bring about some sort of diplomatic overtures. The idea was also to refocus on Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. This also included sending additional troops Afghanistan, strengthening NATO forces, increase aid etc. The third aspect was rebuilding the military that would address the current problem: increasing the size as well as training ground forces, this also meant maintaining dominance in terms of the Airfare and Navy. It addressed the idea of a world without nuclear weapons. This included Iran and North Korea as well as strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Lastly and most important, to renew the alliances to address the challenges. This meant a need to rally behind the NATO alliance, shore up relations with Israel, as well as strengthen the alliances with Japan and South Korea were among the few stated (Obama 2008). These ideals were a reiteration of what he had mentioned in his book *Audacity of Hope* (2006).

In his book *Audacity of Hope* (2006), Obama laid out what would become his foreign policy agenda. The first being U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. He focused on the idea of multilateralism but also the need to act unilaterally when necessary. This was especially true in the right to defend against foreign attacks. The need to focus on allies and increase trust among them and lastly promotion of peace rather than war (Obama 2006).

Obama advocated a policy of restraint. Advocates of restraint challenge the logic of primacy. While primacy asserts that peace and stability are required for a global hegemon, restraint was more optimistic about regional balances of power. The strategy favors peace in contrast to war as well as military intervention of any kind. Military force for reasons other than self-defense was an ineffective apparatus to fight terrorism, it was considered an ineffective way to spread democracy and U.S. values (Glaser and Thrall

2017). The president was intellectually inclined towards redefining America's foreign policy in an international environment with equal powers. Obama was more inclined temperamentally towards prudence and diplomacy rather than use of force. As Obama put in an interview with 'The New Republic' in 2013

*"I am more mindful probably than most of not only our incredible strengths and capabilities, but also our limitations"*(Foer and Hughes 2013).

Obama's foreign policy was also in part based on the liberal internationalist approach. This hinged on multilateralism in an effort to address foreign policy problems. The Obama approach relied on diplomacy, while Bush relied on a more outward assertiveness when it came to American leadership. Obama preferred a more subtle yet strong leadership approach. This was ingrained more in 'smart power' than in hard power. He pledged to "challenge and change", the mindset of people as well as outdated policies that influenced his predecessors (McCormick 2011).

On the issue of the law and the Constitution, he reiterated the idea of respect in the rule of law as well as the Constitution. But that did not equal to diminishing the powers that the president amassed by his predecessors. His vision was to transform the content of American foreign policy without the operating structures. In order to achieve this, he would use the tools at his disposal; EO, signing statements and the power of the veto and others that fall within the purview of executive privilege. Obama's bold promises were in the new ways of thinking about the role of the U.S. in the international community. During one of the debates at the Democratic primary in January 2008, he declared, "I don't want to just end the war, but I want to end the mindset that got us into war in the first place". Obama campaigned on a more realistic approach to national security, rather than the traditional over-ambitious strategies. Obama prioritized negotiating global nuclear arms control agreements as part of his main foreign policy agenda. This also entailed limiting the importance of nuclear weapons in national



security. This worked to a limited extent. Obama's cautious approach, served him and the cause of his foreign policy goals in some key international decisions however this had a reverse affect on his domestic policy (Schier 2011).

As a candidate, Obama laid out a variety of proposed changes to U.S. international security policies. This included scaling back the previous Administration's policies which included imprisonment, interrogation, surveillance, capture, and or killing of suspected terrorists. This blended in with Obama doctrine of restraint. The outreach to the Muslim world was the "based upon mutual interest and mutual respect". But on a strategic note it was an important step up given the missteps by the Bush administration . A renewed focus on combating Al-Qaeda and its allies in Afghanistan, this meant new counterterrorism tactics. Reformulating the strategy was a key component of the Obama's strategy towards combating terrorism within the ambit of constitutional law. In addition to this, hard line policies were downplayed in favor of symbolic notions of diplomacy. The first step in this direction was a change in rhetoric. The rhetoric used by the incoming Obama administration was "terrorism" rather than "war on terror".Obama's strategy seemed 'unrealistic' especially with the stubborn nature to deal with global challenges (Gottlies 2012). Obama sought to bend the arc of history in the direction of justice, and a more peaceful, stable global order (Indyk, Lieberthal et al 2012).

From the leadership perspective, it was difficult to define his brand of leadership as a result of partisan polarization. The conservatives saw Obama as an "evil genius" and the liberals saw his as their "deliverer" who had inherited a sleuth of problems both domestic and international. Obama was considered mysterious, his astute rise to the presidency within the four years of his DNC speech was a mastery in the game of politics. Through his skills as an orator he was able 'to walk with kings and yet had a common touch'.

In an effort to extol the idea of a post partisan presidency, President Obama's national security and foreign policy hinged on, capturing the political centre, by using hardline rhetoric commonly used by Republicans as well as through the actions of a

realist. These traits were not traditionally associated with the Democrats he attempted to capture both sides of the ideological spectrum. However, this was a failure as Republicans refused to compromise. When he entered office, he had an array of challenges before him both domestic and international, he thus focussed on exiting Iraq, as well as an effective, military strategy to counter terrorism, however debating the success of the Administration is subject to partisanship. Obama's approach even when blunders and wrong turns were made, sidestepped rather than commit to direct U.S. involvement, in an attempt to avoid costly mistake and further embroilment in the Middle East. Though strategy focussed on restraint it failed to capitalize the use American power, and what it could achieve. However it acknowledged the limits of American power and in doing so appealed to many independents. He also accepted that there were limits to US power far better than his predecessor. These beliefs of Obama changed once in office. He moved away from his liberal agenda, he hushed conservatives by showing skepticism on Palestine-Israeli talks as well as a tougher stance on Iran and North Korea. There was also the case of over concentration as well as bureaucratic problems wherein in he usurped the details of policy making from his cabinet officers thus leaving him less time. Obama strategy was focussed on a combination of "commonsense and flexibility", rather than a "one size fits all". The result was that even though world leaders did not always agree with Obama, they capitulated and provided support (Gleb 2012). The flexibility in policy was termed 'shadow boxing', which is the combination of the complicated international crisis together with a cautionary policy preferences. This was outlined in Audacity of Hope (2006) (Lasher and Rinehart 2016; McCormick 2011).

Throughout the 8 years of his presidency, Obama's leadership was tested this was especially as scenarios changed in the Middle East. During the Arab Spring, his leadership came under fire this was especially true during the crisis in Libya, the administration was tagged with 'leading from behind'. The president's decision to hand over the operation to NATO was in line with his notions of multilateralism. The brand of multilateralism was seen to a large extent in the negotiations with Iran as well as battling IS and the forming the coalition of nations. This was in contrast to Bush's unilateral,

‘shoot from the hip’, Texan style presidential politics. Obama’s foreign policy was meant to reset relations with the muslim world in the aftermath of the Bush administration. Obama sought to strengthen ties with the region and US allies. In the inaugural address, he affirmed “greatness is never a given. It must be earned”. He also stated to the autocratic leaders that “we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist” (Obama 21st January 2009) . This extension of the ‘olive branch’ rather than the ‘arrows’ was a sign of peace goodwill and a willingness to engage. The words of his inaugural regained true especially when it came to Iran

The outreach to the Muslim world came as part of his address in Cairo. At Cairo, he stated

*“I’ve come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect”* (Obama June 2009).

He drew on his Kenyan-Christian lineage which included muslims in the family to try and form a connection between the U.S. and the muslim world. Throughout the speech he used tones and connections between Islam and America which dated back to the Founders. He talked about the array of differences, this is especially true with the Israeli-Palestinian issues, Iran’s nuclear program, democracy, tolerance, women’s rights and economic development. His tone struck a cord with the Muslim world, the speech was a rousing success (Obama 2009). However the U.S. middle east allies were skeptical of the overture.

He also attempted to reset relations with Russia. During his visit to Moscow in July 2009, he stated that the time had come to move away from the age old Cold War thinking , and that Russia and the U.S. should unite on matters of preventing countries like North Korea and Iran from being nuclear proliferators (Harding and Weaver 2009). There were two factors behind the reset , one was negotiations over a New START Treaty and the other was Obama’s Iran strategy.

A main area wherein Obama and Bush differed was the manner in which to incorporate U.S. values into foreign policy. Obama stated that the U.S. did not need to compromise on its values he stated that in the long run it was America's fundamental values that would help keep America safe therefore as one of his first foreign policy decisions he decided to shutdown Guantanamo Bay. On the other hand, the president though supported democratic movement was weary of the repercussions of such actions. Support for the Arab Spring brought the administration in conflict with U.S. allies in the region. This was especially true in the case of Gaddafi (Libya ) and Mubarak (Egypt) (McCormick 2011). Towards the end of his presidency Obama called the US-led intervention in the Libya "the biggest mistake".

There are some who argued on the necessity of a grand strategy and there are others who argued against it. A grand strategy was a necessity to maintain focus and discipline in policy making scenario. On the converse, it was not always a road map as the international environment is constantly evolving and the domestic environment also changes from time to time together with the bureaucratic politics involved. Obama's strategy hinged on sustaining global leadership and a prudent policy (Brands 2014). Obama's foreign policy had been misconstrued with backing away from the idea of 'American leadership' around the world . This was especially true with the 'Libyan episode' wherein Obama was accredited with the tag line 'leading from behind'. Obama, in his article in Foreign Affairs, discussed the idea of '*Renewing American Leadership*'. America's leadership according to Obama would mean a need for the U.S. to move beyond Iraq war and a refocus on the Middle East at a larger level. Halting the spread of nuclear weapons was another way in which Obama saw the renewal of U.S. leadership. This became clear in his address in Prague 2009. In combating terrorism, he called for a refocus on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The 'Obama Doctrine' entailed, the various tenants mentioned above. The Doctrine from the beginning was difficult to categorize and rivaled traditions of American diplomacy. According to Kaufman in his book *Dangerous Doctrine*, the

Obama Doctrine fell out of the purview of the Jeffersonian, Hamiltonian or Wilsonian schools of thought. The Obama Doctrine also did not fit within the “minimalist nationalism” of George Washington or the “militant nationalism” of Andrew Jackson. Neither did it fit the “defiant realism” of Richard Nixon, the “offensive realism” of Theodore Roosevelt, “the liberal internationalism” of Wilson and FDR or “the conservative internationalism” of Truman, Ronald Reagan. The Obama doctrine was a combination of all of these facets (Kaufman 2016).

Though the doctrine was viewed as pragmatic and a necessity (given the circumstances of the time), the tenants were broad enough to allow Obama room to navigate. “Don’t do stupid stuff” was one way to describe the Obama doctrine that displayed prudence in the use military force, restraint, pragmatism, emphasis on multilateralism (Hoelker 2015). Though Bush and Obama did not see eye to eye on many issues, their common thread lay in the belief of the need for U.S. leadership. This was reflected in America's success as the global superpower for over half century. Like his predecessors, much of what Obama wanted to achieve overseas required the cooperation of others (Lindsay 2011).

In an effort to make an estimate of Obama’s strategy was the National Security Strategy (NSS). NSS (2010) emphasized the idea of ‘strategic engagement’ and the manner in which it would be achieved. The board contours of the NSS 2010 focused on rebuilding the American economy, commitment to American values and reshaping the international system (NSS 2010). In the NSS 2010, the focus was on defining America’s engagement with the world. The NSS was a counter to the Bush strategy of pre-emptive war, it hinged on ‘comprehensive engagement with allies and adversaries. It emphasized the need for international engagement to address global threats, that affect the entire international community, not only the U.S.(Steen Biddel et al 2010). Obama’s policy engagement was different from Reagan’s notions of engagement with the Soviet Union and this was true of Clinton’s policy of engagement as well. Both equated it with economic sanctions though Obama eventually capitulated to the idea of sanctions. His

policy favoured both talks and sanctions (Mann 2013). NSS 2015 focussed on the notion of strategic patience. The reason behind it was ‘timing was everything’, it sent a strong signal to the international community as well as to congress regarding the Iran negotiations (NSS 2015).

### **Obama’s Nuclear Policy**

On 24th September 2009, President Obama chaired the UNSC Summit on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament. This was the first time a US president thus signaling the importance given by the U.S. to the issues. These issues were at the top of the president’s agenda as well as it was a display of the importance given by the administration to the Summit the role of the UN and a commitment to the NPT. This led to the adoption of Resolution 1887 calling for “a world without nuclear weapons”. This reflected Obama’s policy stated in the Prague address which was based on the threat of a nuclear attack, black market trade etc. He framed his policy in terms of a moral responsibility. Therefore, he displayed his commitment to ‘a world without nuclear weapons’. In his speech he listed the steps which included a reduction in the emphasis of nuclear weapons as part of the national security strategy. He urged other nations to do the same. In addition to this, it meant negotiating with Russia on a new START treaty to reduce stockpiles as well as a ban on nuclear testing. He pursued the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by Congress. However, in this endeavor the Obama administration failed (Obama 2009 April 2009).

In the course of a speech, Obama pledged to strengthen the NPT which meant that countries possessing weapons would have to move towards disarmament and a focus on nuclear energy. In addition to this, strengthening and building on the “Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism” into durable international institutions (Obama 2009 April 2009). The Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of 2010 was geared towards a world without nuclear weapons in an effort to achieve this it focussed on prevention of nuclear proliferation and terrorism, reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategy, strengthening regional deterrence and lastly

sustaining safe secured effective nuclear arsenal (NPR 2010). In 2013, the “Fact Sheet” on the employment of the strategy displayed the reaffirmation to a “strong and credible strategic deterrent” as well as a reduction one-third of deployed strategic nuclear weapons established by the New START Treaty (The White House 2013).

As part Obama’s nuclear strategy, the Nuclear Security Summit was set up in an effort to engage as well as reduce nuclear terrorism. The Nuclear Security Summit became a comprehensive part of the dialogue process. All in all there were four Summits held. The first Summit was held in April 2010 in Washington D.C , the second took place in 2012 in Seoul , the third in 2014 at the Hague and the last in 2016 in Washington D.C. The first one wherein more than 50 world leaders attended . The Summit focussed to prevent nuclear terrorism and counter nuclear smuggling (the White House March 29th 2016).

In matters pertaining to the nuclear strategy, the New START with Russia was a main endeavor and focussed on a reduction of nuclear arsenal on both sides. By 2016, the U.S. had reduced its arsenal to 4,018 warheads. Overall, the Administration reduced the stockpile by more than 1,000 warheads since taking office in 2009. The Obama Administration had been more forthcoming about the size of U.S. nuclear stockpile in comparison to the predecessors. In the area of disarmament, non-proliferation as well as securing vulnerable nuclear materials around the world, a great deal of progress was made through the Nuclear Summits. The other tenets of his policy was based on engagement with North Korea as well as Iran as a way to end their nuclear weapons programs. Though the Administration was successful in negotiating the New START as well as the Iran Deal, it failed at curtailing North Korea’s nuclear as well as the ballistic program, as well as ratification of the CTBT. The UNSC approved the resolution in support of the CTBT by a 14-0 vote, with Egypt abstaining. The resolution was co-sponsored by 42 countries including Israel. This came 20 years after the treaty was opened for signature. Obama also inched towards a “no-first use policy” (NFU). Though there were many conservatives that condemned the him for this as the power of the office

relied on the president's ability to use nuclear weapons or at least the threat. The president to gather with members of the military is the sole designator of the codes to America's nuclear arsenal (commonly called the nuclear football)(Reif 2017).

The debate within and outside the administration over the No First Use (NFU) policy came up during the second term of Obama's presidency. The NFU was not part of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review. Though the US has not formally declared an NFU policy it has nevertheless and more or less followed an NFU strategy. Supporters of the policy state that from a de facto point of view the US upholds such a policy. A declared NFU policy has an added advantage of reducing miscalculation from Russians and the Chinese. It is also an important aspect in a strategy of disarmament. On the other hand critics of a declared NFU policy - involvement of the allies especially East Asian and European allies as it could impede the U.S. policy towards these regions in times of crisis, therefore it could undercut the U.S. standing among the allies. There were many within the Administration that opposed this policy, especially the main player Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter , Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz. By the end of the administration the U.S. still maintained an undeclared NFU policy (Panda 2018).

The end result was that the president backed away from the initiative and stated that U.S. capabilities were not yet to a point where nonnuclear options were sufficient. Former defense officials William Perry and Vice Chairman of the JCS Gen. James Cartwright, have spoken in favor of a NFU policy. The main reason behind Obama not adopting the NFU was as a result of the allies (Fetter and Wolfsthal 2018).

Obama's policy on missile defense was also influenced by outside forces especially when it came to Poland and Czech Republic. The U.S. was scheduled to send the missile defense systems to these countries in 2009 but stalled as a result of ongoing negotiations between US-Russia on the New START agreement. One of the hallmarks of Obama's policy was a reduction in the focus of nuclear weapons as part of U.S. foreign policy.



## **“Never Fear To Negotiate”: Obama’s Policy Towards Iran**

On the campaign trail, Obama differed from Hillary Clinton on a number of issues this was especially in dealing with Iran. Clinton favored a hardline while Obama favored a strategy that called for negotiations without preconditions. There were also a number of members from the Bill Clinton administration that joined Obama. This included Susan Rice Anthony Lake and Rahmn Emmanuel and others who shared Obama’s vision. As Obama was against the war in Iraq, the more progressive of the Clinton’s advisors joined him. In addition to these, Obama also sought the advise of traditional Republicans like Colin Powell (who was at odds with President Bush on the Iraq war), Brent Scowcroft (Lusane 2008).

In stressing on ‘no preconditions’, he was of the opinion that sanctions that were imposed were not very successful. During the campaign and a few months prior to the election Obama outlined his policy in clearer terms and there was a clear division with his rivals in designating the Revolutionary Guard as a terror group. He also focussed a great deal on “direct diplomacy”. He further stated that “American interests are advanced by direct negotiations with our enemies...”. Obama’s, new emphasis was on a willingness to talk (Seliktar 2012; Singh 2011 ). Though his strategy came across as being naïve at times it was in actuality ‘strategic patience’. He was also willing to use his political capital in order for the U.S. to reach a deal with Iran. Obama became the first president to acknowledge the existence of Iran as “Islamic Republic”. However, engagement with Iran was made difficult as a result of the leadership. This included both Ayatollah Khamenei and the President Ahmadinejad. The support of terrorist organization and issues pertaining to human rights. On the allied front, the Israelis expressed concern for Obama’s overtures right from the start (D’Antonio 2016).

There were strategic reasons behind the president’s choice of throwing his political capital (time and energy) into framing a coherent policy towards Iran. Obama faced a embolden Iran as result of the Iraq War. As a result go the National Intelligence Estimate 2007 (NIE) under his predecessor Obama faced secret nuclear sites in Iran like

Natanz and the possibility of more as well as Iran's expanding nuclear program whether civilian or military (Sanger 2009). In addition to this, one of the recommendations made by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group focussed on direct negotiations with Iran. This was supported by former secretaries Madeline Albright, Colin Powell, Warren Christopher, Henry Kissinger and James Baker. It was also during the Bush years that Iran increased its number of centrifuges to 8,000 as well as its influence in the region especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus, as senator exploited the vacuum created by Bush and thus emerged Obama's foreign policy belief (Parsi 2012b). It also was the president's foresight that he and his administration probably knew that if they could get Iran to the negotiating table it would become the hallmark foreign policy of his presidency. By the time Obama began to engage with the Iranians, Ahmadinejad was under the impression that he could do so from a position of strength rather than weakness. This was as a result of the U.S. situation both at home and abroad. Prior to the extension of the 'olive branch' to the Middle East and the Muslim world the president handed the Iranians an unclenched fist. This first came in the form of a letter to Ayatollah and later with the Nowruz greeting. For the administration the 'outstretch' was a pertinent move given that Obama had not yet made his Cairo address thus giving Iran the position of being one of the first on Obama's list. The first step was the congratulatory message by Ahmadinejad to Obama in November 2008. However, this was coupled with a warning as well. This was the first in the history of the Islamic Republic that an Iranian President sent a letter to the American (in an open domain) since 1979 (Black 2009). In March 2009, President Obama, addressed the Iranian people directly in what became his yearly Nowruz greeting,

*"...we are reminded of the common humanity that binds us together...but it comes with real responsibilities, and that place cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions that demonstrate the true greatness of the Iranian people and civilization. And the measure of that greatness is not the capacity to destroy, it is your demonstrated ability to build and create"* (Obama March 19 2009).

He further stated ,

*“My administration is committed to diplomacy that would address the full range of issues ...and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran and the international community”* (The White House March 20th 2009).

In early May 2009, President Obama once again communicated with the Iranians , this time it was in the form of a letter to the Ayatollah. According Mousavian, the letter addressed Obama clear strategy of ‘rapprochement’ towards Iran (Mousavian 2013). Prior to the June election the president sent another letter. The letter set out the prospects of “co-operation in regional and bilateral relations”, it also addressed Iran’s nuclear program. The message was sent through the Swiss embassy (which represented U.S. interests) to the Iranian Foreign Ministry passed to the Iranian foreign ministry by the Swiss embassy (MacAskill 2009). However the Ayatollah did not respond with the impending elections and the question of who would lead the initiative. There were other reasons for the lack of response which included the perception of the softening the line. The letter entailed details for the discussion between Washington and Tehran . The Ayatollah responded to the letter in the aftermath of the election, timing was key (Mousavian 2013).

This would not be the last letter sent by the Administration, thus Obama emphasized the role of such communication between the Great Satan and Mad Mullah it was the first time since the revolution. The letter itself signaled a change in the way Obama would deal with Iran. Obama sought direct negotiation to improve the relationship between the two countries However this was prior to the election (June 2009) that culminated in protests and there after the crackdown. This rocked the shaky foundation on which US-Iran relations stood on.

Prior to the Iranian elections, Obama addressed the Muslim world in his Cairo address June 2009 by stating that,

*“it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It's about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path”* (Obama June 4th 2009).

He further stated,

*“I strongly reaffirm America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons...And any nation - including Iran - should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty”* (Obama June 4th 2009).

### **Obama and the Green Movement**

The outreach to the Muslim countries was met with fierce skepticism at home, especially from the Republicans this was especially true as a result of the regime and the Middle East allies. Nevertheless given the scenario of America's standing around the world being at an all time low there was a need for a change in policy. From Obama's perspective, combing all terror sponsors together was an expensive as well as fraught a strategy. For the outreach to work Obama relied on minimizing the salience of the the nature of the regime, diplomacy was not the only tool but nevertheless it was one of the most important tools. Internal differences within the administrations were a cause of concern as well. This was especially with Clinton, Gates and Mullen who preferred harsher measures (Singh 2012).

The overt outreach received a major setback with the presidential elections of 2009 and the crackdown that followed. The elections culminated in the reelection of Ahmadinejad over the more moderate candidate Mousavi, election fraud was at the core of the protests which brought international condemnation on the Islamic Republic (Indyk et al 2012).

The Iranian election and more so the state's response to the election results further complicated Obama's outreach to Iran. In the aftermath of the election, about three million Iranians protested against the election and stated the results were rigged. Ayatollah Khamenei's intervention, described the result as "divine assessment," this increased the sense of injustice while undermining his own legitimacy as Supreme Leader (Katzman 2009a).

Obama's policy towards Tehran had been one of 'strategic patience' mixed with 'strategic engagement' from the outset, one of the reasons behind this was to afford the Iranian domestic and internal politics time to work and reach a unified policy (NSS 2010, NSS 2015)

From the beginning, Obama was aware that engagement with Iran would be an uphill battle. His task was made even more difficult during the protests in Iran over the presidential election. This came to be known as the Green Movement. Obama had to balance national interest with U.S. ideals and the belief in democratic values. Therefore, during the protest President Obama had to tread lightly. This prompted a delayed reaction, the members of the administration had numerous discussions with the president on the course of action. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushed for a quicker reaction and condemnation over the crackdown in Iran. The fiercest opposition to Obama's policy during the movement came from the Republicans and many of the Democrats within Congress. The movement came on the heels of the Obama's outreach to the Iranians. Therefore, the president was weary of damaging the progress made or rather the progress that could be made. The administration ultimately followed a 'wait and see' approach as advised by their contacts within Iran. Obama decided against involvement. The larger priority for Obama was the Iranian nuclear program. Clinton in retrospect believed that the administration's restraint was an error (Clinton 2014).

As pressure built up, Obama finally spoke in favor of the protestors. According to various sources, Obama at times overruled his advisors many of who supported the

promotion of democracy (Solomon 2016). In a press briefing on June 23rd Obama spoke out but avoided terms like “stolen election” and propagated a “wait and see” approach (Obama press conference June 23rd 2009). Instead, Obama stated that the U.S. together with the allies condemned and were outraged by the crackdown that included threats, beatings and imprisonments (Levs CNN 2012). Citizens of the world and Iran looked to the newly elected leader to support them , finally got limited support. President Obama went to the extent of ordering a stand down by the CIA. The primary reason behind Obama’s uncertainty and delayed reaction was a larger quest of engagement with the Iranian leadership. Obama’s Republican contender John McCain berated the president’s hesitance, the Republicans in Congress began to reassert themselves in the form of proposing resolutions that supported the idea of democracy. On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2009, President Obama responded to the protestors stating that it was up to the people of Iran to decide their government and leadership. He went further to state that the situation at the time was a great “concern” to the U.S. but at the same time was concerned about perception in Iran and the impact on diplomacy. Obama, in this case was a shrewd politician and was unwilling to allow the pro-democracy protests to get in the way of his engagement with Tehran. The State Department felt the pressure the most when it came to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations (Ahmari 2011).

The administration was well aware of the fact that it would not going to be easy to begin negotiations given that it could be a political liability coupled with historical baggage, therefore there was a need to avoid further problems between the two. It was a strategic call, one that would test his leadership in American foreign policy (Bloomberg 2016).

Obama had invested considerable capital in the Iran Outreach Project headed by Trita Parsi. In the aftermath, the administration had to scramble for a new policy direction. The movement did in fact color the administration’s policy and strategy towards Iran. The use of ‘sticks’ that is sanctions became the more prominent option. The human rights groups were up in arms, so were the Republicans in Congress. Therefore,

Obama had to walk a tightrope, between domestic politics and furthering diplomacy with Iran. Obama's delayed response forced the Congress to pass various bills that supported the Iranian people and the democratic process. Obama had to balance condemnation of Iranian regime with engagement. After the movement had fizzled out, Obama had to come up with a different strategy towards Iran, one that would not incite a domestic uproar. Therefore, the administration began to think of sanctions coupled with negotiations. Obama in part had to roll back on the strategy that he had carved out (Seliktar 2012).

### **The Obama Administration, P5+1 & Iran Negotiations**

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly Obama met with world leaders to discuss Iran's nuclear program. In September 2009, as a pre-emptive move, the Iranians informed the IAEA regarding the facility at Fordow (near Qom). The members of the administration strategized over the manner in which to reveal it to the world. It was at the G20 Summit, in Pittsburgh, Obama flanked by Nicholas Sarkozy, Gordon Brown announced to the world Iran's nuclear program that was not cognizant with a peaceful purposes (Clinton 2014). Obama in his press conference stated, "It is time for Iran to act immediately to restore the confidence of the international community by fulfilling its international obligations". Obama shared intelligence on the Iranian plant with Russian President Dimitri Medvedev (Spetalnick and Heinrich 2009). In addition to the revelations, there was another factor that provided the P5 an opening when it came to the negotiations. This came in the form of the need to replenish the fuel pads of the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). The Iranian Ambassador to the IAEA Ali Asghar Soltanieh requested the agency to buy fuel pads for the TRR which was a medical research reactor. The Obama administration devised a plan wherein the Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) would be first sent to Russia for further enrichment to 19.75%, and then to France for fabrication into fuel assemblies. The swap was mutually beneficial to both; on the one hand it would give Iran the fuel pads required for the TRR and on the other it would get the LEU out of Iran. For Obama the swap was a win. However, Obama hit a problem in

attempting to sell the deal to allies. France was extremely skeptical and preferred the sanction route. Obama was willing to take the risk. He had to persuade Russia to aid in the swap which at first it was unwilling. President Obama's policy of engagement with adversarial nations would be put to the test in the negotiations with Iran. In October 2009 the P5+1 met in Geneva, this was the first time in 2009 and the first time since Obama took office. The agenda was the fuel swap as well as the newly revealed Qom facility. For the US the chief negotiators were William Burns, Robert Einhorn and Puneet Talwar. The meeting was an important facet to the Administration's strategy international "engagement" was well as its attempts to persuade Iran to halt its nuclear program (Keyes 2009; Fitzpatrick 2010).

Saeed Jalili the Iranian negotiator agreed to meet Burns one on one. The face-to-face meeting incited a great deal of possibilities for the flailing negotiation process. Burns outlined the terms of the agreement under international pressure. Obama in a statement regarding the meeting stated that the U.S. has "entered a phase of intensive international negotiations" one based on "pledges of cooperation must be fulfilled". He went further to state that the situation was "a path towards a better relationship with the United States" (Obama October 1st 2009; Kessler 2009). At first the Iranians accepted the proposals, but domestic pressures changed their position. This was seen with a reversal in the November meeting in Vienna. However these hopes were dashed as later in October the negotiating sides met and Iran refused the deal (Clinton 2014; Singh 2012).

In addition to its significance as a confidence-building mechanism, the plan as originally agreed offered important benefits to both sides. The deal had it passed, would have reduced Iran's stockpile below the level necessary to produce a nuclear weapon and in return Iran would have retained only as much LEU as it possessed in August 2008. In addition to this, it would have provided diplomatic breathing space for long-term solution. It would have established the principle that Iranian uranium could be enriched outside of Iran. For the Obama, the hope of a breakthrough lay in the fact that it could set the stage for constructive dialogue on a range of other issues. Thus, the administration



would have tackled two birds with one stone; Iran as well as reset relations with Russia (Fitzpatrick 2010). The idea of imposing sanctions was not brought up during the meeting that lasted seven and half hours. But the Iranians backed off from the Geneva agreement when the IAEA, France, Russia, the U.S. and Iran met in Vienna on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009 (Fitzpatrick 2010).

Iran made a counter proposal that it would begin enrichment at 20% if aid to the TRR was not provided, they set a deadline for the beginning of 2010. It was this that changed Obama's stance with Iran. Obama began moving towards sanctions, this was especially true when the IAEA deal that had been struck fell through as the Iranians were unwilling at the time to turn over their enriched uranium to Russia as well as agree to internal inspectors (Obama October 1st 2009; Kessler 2009). The Iranians lack of cooperation left the administration with few choices to either go the military route or the diplomatic one. However the 'use of force' was a last option this was also agreed on by the military members of the administration. Therefore economic sanctions were the way out (Clinton 2014). However the president faced an uphill battle of persuading the international community to go along with his decision.

By the end of 2009, Obama policy of engagement had taken a serious hit. Obama's powers of persuasion, like most presidents have at their disposal was on display when it came to the imposition of economic sanctions, this was respect with the international community. Coupling sanctions with engagement became thus became the cornerstone of Obama's policy towards Iran. There were the conservatives who called his strategy 'naïve', but the president was partially able to silence his critics by exposing Qom and stating an all options on the table strategy. Within the administration there was multiple view points, Clinton, Gates and Mullen put a greater focus on the military option as they were skeptical about the success of the negotiations. Obama may not have touted with the idea, but he did not want the Iranians to think that he was going soft. Thus, in the words of Kennedy trying to negotiate from a position of strength. However, the bigger problem was Israel (Mann 2011). When the outreach proved to be a setback

Obama had to find another policy, this time he set his sights on economic pressure . It was what Hillary Clinton called ‘ crippling sanctions’.

### **Dual Track Policy Towards Iran: A Time to Sanction Iran**

The primary author of the dual track policy that was initially the ‘hybrid option’ was Dennis Ross and Puneet Talwar. This included a strategy of engagement without preconditions and sanctions. The State Department called it a dual-track strategy. In doing so, Obama relied on the Stuart Levey at the Treasury Department who devised a strategy to squeeze the Iranians and was met with a great deal of success (Parsi 2012b). In going the sanction route, the administration had to tackle Russia and China who were unwilling supporters.

Persuading the global community especially China and Russia was not easy task. The Russian leadership at the time was more in favor of working with Obama unlike later under Putin. During the presidency of Medvedev, and more specifically during the UN negotiations regarding the fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran the two leaders spoke and met at international summits in an effort to further their support for sanctions. Medvedev being more moderate and willing to work with the international community only aided Obama’s task of getting Russia on board. Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State worked hard in an effort to build a consensus. This in fact mirrored George H Bush gaining consensus prior to Gulf War I (Chollet 2016 ). Clinton favored an ‘all option on the table’ policy and though she favored negotiations, she was more of a hawk in comparison to Obama. In addition to Clinton, US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, was Obama’s point person in the UN and was therefore the go-to person on the sanctions. Rice also attempted to discredit the parallel deal that was being negotiated by Brazil and Turkey though there was outward support from the US officials however there was a feeling that it detracted from Obama’s course of action (Charbonneau 2010).

As the administration took a step in the direction of imposing sanctions, there were other countries willing to fill the vacuum of diplomacy. While other countries like

Japan and Turkey attempted to negotiate with Tehran on its nuclear program the Obama administration towards the end of the year was ready to begin with the second track that was sanctions. This second track coincided with Obama being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In the acceptance speech (December 2009), he reiterated the belief in a nuclear free world,

*“... the effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and to seek a world without them... All will have access to peaceful nuclear power; those without nuclear weapons will forsake them; and those with nuclear weapons will work towards disarmament. I am committed to upholding this treaty. It is a centerpiece of my foreign policy”* (Obama December 2009).

The White House’s preference was to first impose sanctions through the UN Security Council, targeting Iran’s nuclear program and possible arms sales. Obama’s focus on multilateralism vs unilateralism played a major role in his decision making process. In addition to this, the strength of multilateral sanctions would be far more effective. Therefore, targeted sanctions that hit the Iranian leadership were preferred over broad sanctions that hit the Iranian people and the entire economy. President Obama was at first reluctant to move towards the implementation of sanctions as it could have an adverse effect on the negotiation process. There was a great deal of skepticism within Congress regarding the president’s policies, for its part the members of the administration were apprehensive over a setback in the negotiating process. The sanctions were aimed at targeting the Revolutionary Guard and other institutions of the Iranian regime was their best option. Obama wanted to avoid pre-emptive sanctions by Congress. This would have created a credibility gap for Obama when he went to the UN (Parsi 2012b) .

The members of the administration were well aware that getting the UNSC to vote for sanctions would be a herculean task given the ambivalence of Russia and the China. Nevertheless, sanctions imposed on Iran by a unified UNSC would be more effective than a divided Security Council. In this task, Obama turned to the U.S.

Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice as well as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who became the faces of the sanction program. Rice's 'cowboyish' as well as sometimes 'rude attitude' and a 'no-nonsense style' aided in sanction process. But her close association with the president meant that she had his ear. As the youngest woman and the first African-American woman to become U.S. ambassador to the U.N., she led negotiations on the fourth round of U.N. sanctions. She was armed with the support from the president as well as that of the administration. Britain and France, which had drafted the three previous U.N. sanctions resolutions on Iran, were reluctant to allow Rice to be the "pen holder" for a fourth round of sanctions. One of the reasons was that the envoys feared the administration would offer a weak draft in an effort to boost engagement with Tehran. Rice's draft was far tougher than expected (Charbonneau 2012).

In an effort to get China and Russia on board, Obama had to make a number of concessions. He had to look the other way on matters pertaining to currency manipulation as well as matters pertaining to trade. Though China and the U.S. experienced periods of diplomatic tension, the economies were (and continue to be) intertwined which made it essential for the U.S. to maintain good relations. The Chinese were also worried about the impact of sanctions on oil supplies. The Saudis agreed and guaranteed Beijing that they (the Kuwaitis and Emiratis) would meet all of China's oil needs if the Chinese supported the sanctions on Iran. It proved to be a key piece of the international diplomatic effort against Iran (Fisher 2010). The Foreign Minister Yang met Clinton and emphatically stated in January 2010 that it was "not time to discuss sanctions on Iran". But Clinton and her team at State throughout 2010 (up to June) worked to garner the votes. A wide range of diplomatic maneuvers were used, this included back room negotiations, horse-trading, arm twisting, appeals to self-interest and hard-ball politics. Though the administration focussed on the five permanent members, they also required all the fifteen members to vote in favor, assembling the fifteen was tricky. David Miliband and Clinton worked together in an effort to get China on board along with Rice (Clinton 2014).

As China deferred to Russia on most occasions, the administration had to get Russia to agree to the sanctions. Russia being a veto member of the UNSC was an important and mandatory vote. The Russian leadership, particularly President Dmitri Medvedev, made an effort to strengthen diplomatic as well as economic ties with Europe and the U.S. He attempted to reverse the anti-West strategy of Moscow. This was visible with Russia's rapprochement with Poland, strengthening economic ties with France to name a few (Fisher 2010).

Obama had to make a number of concessions in an effort to get Russia on board. The Administration had to withdraw sanctions against the Russian's export of arms as well as entities that had supplied technology to Tehran. Russian and American officials also stated that while the UN resolution banned many weapons sales to Iran, it did not put an end to the sale of S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to Tehran. This contract had been suspended but not cancelled. The President received a great deal of bipartisan blowback from Congress. David J. Kramer, who oversaw Russia policy in President George W. Bush's State Department, said the concessions were "premature and unwarranted" without a firm commitment not to transfer the S-300s. Representative Adam B. Schiff (D-CA) co-chairman of the Nuclear Security Caucus, though showed support for improving US-Russia ties was skeptical about the UN resolution and whether Russia deserved the concessions (Baker and Sanger 2010). Though President Obama made concessions with China and Russia they were not received positively by members in Congress. For Obama, the risk was worth it as China and Russia supported the UN sanctions thus achieving the breakthrough that was hoped for.

Obama used the newly formed National Security Summit to further his sanction policy. The White House invited 46 countries to attend the Summit. In the most notable case, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu abruptly canceled his planned trip to the Summit. President Hu Jin Tao and Obama spoke about China's support for the sanctions, it was a maneuver by President Obama to get Chinese onboard. In May Russia and China caught the international community off-guard and announced their support for

UN sanctions. This was a victory for the Obama administration who along with the P5 were trying to get Russia and China's support (MacAskill 2010a). Throughout April and even May, Clinton continued to meet members of the Chinese delegation like Dai Bingguo in an effort to get China on board in spite of the surprise from Brazil and Turkey. These efforts continued at the Organization of American States meeting in Peru wherein Clinton met with China's Ambassador to the U.S., Zhang Yesui to discuss the sanctions. This eventually paid off (Clinton 2014).

While getting Russia and China on board was a concentrated effort by Rice, Clinton and Obama's team, there was a surprise offer from Brazil and Turkey who wanted to salvage the TRR proposal and effectively usurp Obama's ability to lead which in some respects could have created a credibility problem for Obama. In mid-May, Presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan went to Tehran and announced that they had brokered a deal. The problem with their vaguely worded declaration was unclear on the arrangements for shipping the material out of Iran to be swapped for TRR fuel plates. In addition to this, Iran had already resumed enriching to 20%. The third and far bigger issue was that the administration had invested a great deal of time and effort as well as political capital in getting Russia and China to support UN sanctions. Therefore the U.S. along with the P5 went ahead with the vote (Burns 2019).

In fact the Brazilian and Turkish leadership began their negotiations at the G8 Summit 2009. During a brief discussion on Iran between Lula and Obama in Italy, the Brazilian president mentioned that he wanted to meet with the Iranians. Obama appreciated Lula's helpful stance. Lula then met with Ahmadinejad for a full hour at the annual UNGA opening on September 23. The Brazilian president pressed Ahmadinejad on the importance of opening up Iran's nuclear program for more IAEA inspections. On the other hand, Turkey had a more complicated relationship with Iran. Turkey had an added incentive to get involved, that was playing an important role at the regional leadership level. Erdoğan had Lula travel to Iran in an effort to broker a deal. In May, the presidents of Iran, Brazil and Turkey brokered a deal; Iran was to export half of its

LEU stockpile to Turkey in return for fuel for the TRR. The terms of the arrangement were nearly identical to the proposal made by the French, Russians, U.S. and the IAEA in October 2009 (Crail 2010).

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2010, the UN finally voted on UN Resolution 1929. The UNSC approved new sanctions against Iran 12-2 with Lebanon abstaining, Brazil and Turkey opposed the sanctions. The sanctions targeted the Revolutionary Guard, ballistic missiles, and nuclear-related investments. Brazil and Turkey delayed the vote as a result of their own power-play. The representatives of both countries were waiting for word from their foreign ministries on whether to vote for or against. President Obama welcomed the new sanctions as it sent an “unmistakable message” to Tehran. According to the president, the sanctions were the “toughest” placed on Iran. This was in spite of the sanctions being not as tough as the initial proposal. Obama stated that Iranian leaders continued to “hide behind outlandish rhetoric” while moving ahead with their “deeply troubling” nuclear program (CBS 2010).

Prior to the vote, Obama spent forty minutes on the phone with Lula, urging Brazil to abstain. The Obama administration did not have faith in the Turkish leadership to actually control the situation. At the same time, the U.S. was skeptical of the agreement. Obama had a great deal riding on the sanctions politically. The imposition of sanctions was a political investment one in which the president had invested a great deal of time and effort in wrangling the members of the Security Council. President Obama had also limited domestic capital to spend on the Tehran Declaration negotiated by Turkey and Brazil. Congress had been pushing for sanctions and Obama found it politically prudent to give in. In settling the issue over the sanctions, the Obama administration moved to its regional partners as well as Asian countries to invoke sanctions on Iran. Likewise, Obama’s diplomats convinced the Saudis and other Gulf Arabs to use their economic clout in support of the case for sanctions against Iran in ways that no other administration had ever been able to do so. As a result, by the summer of

2012, Washington could boast of having put together an unprecedented coalition of states determined to put pressure on Iran (Crail 2010).

In spite of his success at the UN, Obama stated that the sanctions would not change Iran's behavior, the vote was a demonstration of the consequences of the Iranian actions. This president expressed hope that the sanctions would encourage the leadership to "engage. He also addressed the nature of sanctions and that that they were not directed at the "Iranian people" (Obama 9th June 2010).

In the aftermath of the UN sanctions, the next round of sanctions were imposed by the U.S. Congress. The president though was ambivalent to sign the bills into law was left with little or no choice Congress overwhelmingly passed and President Obama signed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) into law. The sanctions targeted the supply of refined petroleum products sent to Iran by non-U.S. firms. At the time, Iran imported about 30% of its refined gasoline because of the poor state of its own refineries. Several major international oil firms announced a cut off of refined products to Iran because of CISADA's provisions (Borger 2012). However Congress continued to impose and extend sanctions that were part of the defense authorization Act 2012.

Following the UN, the EU imposed sanctions on July 26th 2010. The sanctions included the a halt of European investment of the Iranian oil and gas sector as well as technology, financing and assistance for liquefied natural gas (LNG). The sanctions also included a ban on government support for trade with Iran, a ban on the opening of new Iranian bank branches in EU member states, and the sale, purchase of government and bank bonds to name a few (Patterson 2013).

Obama himself at times had been assertive when it came to sanctions. Through EO, President Obama imposed additional sanctions with respect to Iran. In 2011, Obama signed EO 13574 that extended the Iran Sanction Act of 1996 to included prohibition of any U.S. financial institution from providing loans or credits, prohibition of



transactions in foreign exchange that were subject to the jurisdiction of the US as well as blocking all property and interests in property that were in the US. It also prohibited imports of goods, technology, or services, directly or indirectly, into the US from sanctioned persons (EO 1574 2012; EO 13574 2011).

Through the EOs the president authorized the implementation of certain sanctions set within the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act 2012. Sanctions were imposed on foreign financial institutions that knowingly conducted or facilitated any significant transaction to the Iranian rials (White House 2013) . Through EO in 2012 , the president blocked property and suspended entry into the United States of certain persons with respect to grave human rights abuses by the Governments of Iran and Syria via Information Technology. (The White House 2012).

Through EO 13590 authorized the imposition of certain sanctions with respect to the provision of goods, services, technology, or support for Iran's energy and petrochemical sectors (The White House 2011). The EO signed on July 30, 2012 by President Obama expanded sanctions in section 1245 of the FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). These sanctions included knowingly conducting or facilitating significant transactions with a private or public foreign financial institution that pertained to Iranian oil. Through EO 13606 of April 22, 2012 authorized sanctions and visa bans against those who committed or facilitated grave human rights abuses via information technology. This also targeted companies that provided the technology used by regimes for oppressive purposes, and the "digital guns for hire" who created or operated systems used to monitor, track, and target citizens for killing, torture, or other grave abuses. By EO 13608 of May 1, 2012 , the president authorized new sanctions against those who engaged in activities intended to evade U.S. sanctions. President Obama enacted EO 13599 of February 5, 2012 to block all assets of the Government of Iran and all Iranian financial institutions that were within the jurisdiction of the United States. This was designed to make it difficult for the Iranian regime to work through international financial institutions to finance its nuclear weapons program. Through EO

13590 of November 20, 2011, the president imposed new sanctions that targeted Iran's petrochemical sector for the first time and expanding energy sanctions. It was designed to make it more difficult for Iran to operate, maintain, and modernize its oil and gas sector (The White House 2012).

### **Negotiating with a Reluctant Iran (2011 - 2013)**

The Obama administration attempts at negotiating with Iran were futile. In fact in the aftermath of the sanctions there were several rounds of negotiations that proved any kind of negotiation was useless. At times both sides played hard ball which ended in a stalemate while at other times they played a game of chicken. As per Obama NSS (2010) 'strategic engagement', the president moved towards upholding his end of the bargain which meant pursuing engagement with Iran. However, this was a political cost for the president as Congress ever so often made diplomacy difficult.

The P5+1 and Iran met in Geneva (December 2010) and Istanbul (January 2011), when the dual-track policy dictated that Washington raise the stakes. The U.S. and the E.U. prepared a new package to present to Iran, which had tougher conditions than the previous package (2009) rejected by Iran. Rather than requesting that Iran to ship out 1,200 kilograms of LEU, the Obama administration wanted Iran to hand over 2,000 kilograms of its enriched uranium. The U.S. and the P5+1 came up with a revised swap proposal that was considered unrealistic. The Iranian negotiator, Saeed Jalili, was unable to promise to put forth the proposal in Tehran and report back to the P5+1. Instead, Jalili insisted that the West first agree on a framework that respected Iran's rights as a signatory of the NPT to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. The Iranians also refused to meet directly with the American delegation, despite mounting pressure from the E.U. The Istanbul round left the Obama administration with little opportunity and were therefore willing to accept some amount of enrichment as indicated by some reports .the Negotiations achieved little as Iran continued to enrich at 20% (Parsi 2017; Mousavian 2013).

Any hope by the west in an effort to kick start the negotiations was dampened with Iran forcefully pushing their agenda. They also refused U.S. overtures to meet on the sidelines. With the failure to achieve little or nothing in Istanbul (2011), the U.S. Congress once again began to pressurize Obama regarding additional sanctions. There were external factors that pushed for sanctions, this especially came from Israel. There were questions raised over cyber attacks (Stuxnet) which the administration categorically rejected (The Guardian 2011). Within the hallways of power there was talk of an Israeli attack on the Iranian nuclear facilities on that would surely dry the U.S into an unwanted and unwarranted collision with the Iranians. There were additional crises in the region that took up much of the president's time this came mainly in the form of the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring (2010-2011) reinvigorated Iran's position in the region. The ouster of governments friendly towards the U.S. and Israel was welcomed by Iran. In the beginning, Obama played a similar role as he did during the Green Movement. At first Obama did not outwardly support the movement as protests increased, he outwardly supported the democratization process as it became a necessity. The Arab Spring created additional problems for the Obama presidency, which diverted his attention. The dilemma was especially as a result of the clash between Iran and Saudi which exacerbated the enmity between two in the form of the proxy wars. Iran's support for Assad together with the IRGC was especially problematic as the administration was in the midst of its negotiations with Iran. There was domestic pressure from Congress regarding Obama's policy in Syria.

During 2011, little and no progress was made when it came the Iran negotiations. However, behind the scenes there was a great deal of traffic. According to Mousavian in his book *Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace*, mentioned a great deal of Track II initiatives on the part of the Iranians who were eager to establish relations with the U.S. (Mousavian 2014). Obama and members of his negotiating team had resorted to backchannels. The leadership in Oman led by Sultan Qaboos was eager to play a key role in bringing the two sides together. The Sultan was in

a unique position as he shared good relations with both the U.S. as well as with the Ayatollah. These backchannel initiatives began when Americans were taken hostage, they began as low-key overtures from Oman back in 2009. The backchannel gained precedence in 2011 as negotiations were at a stalemate and the administration seemed desperate as Iran continued to enrich uranium. Therefore, the members of the administration felt it was necessary to test the waters. In 2011, Clinton met with the Sultan in Muscat, Obama himself spoke to the Sultan a number of times on the phone. It was Senator John Kerry the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee who was enthusiastic about the backchannel process. Throughout 2011 and 2012, Kerry, Clinton and Donilon co-ordinated with each other and set up meetings and phone calls with the Sultan and Salem Al-Ismaïly who was an envoy of the Sultan and U.S. contact in Oman. The Sultan proposed direct talks between the U.S. and Iranians in Muscat (Burns 2019). On the Iranian side, the situation began to change as well, the leadership displayed a greater need to resume negotiations and were keen on bilateral meeting between the U.S. and Iran to take place. In September 2012, in New York, Ahmadinejad announced, "Iran recognizes the United States and believes that we can have relations with each other" (Mousavian 2014). This was seen as a green light to pursue bilateral and backchannel negotiations.

Obama's backchannel team included Clinton, Bill Burns, Puneet Talwar (National Security Staff Senior Director for Iran), Jake Sullivan, Tom Donilon (NSA), Dennis McDonough (Deputy NSA), Dennis Ross and John Kerry. Within the administration there were many including Obama and Clinton who were ambivalent over this track of diplomacy. In July 2012, a meeting was set up between Obama's team and the Sultan. The Obama administration kept all avenues open, as they continued explore the backchannels, they simultaneously put international pressure in an effort to shore up support for the allies. In attempt to further pressurize Iran, in May 2012 the Administration was successful in convincing countries like India and others who were considered one of the biggest importers of Iranian oil to cut back on their imports in an effort to bring Iran to the negotiating table. Though India at first refused, eventually

complied with the U.S. (Clinton 2014). In the case of India, by 2013 New Delhi had cut back over 26.5% of its oil imports from Iran as the sanctions made the shipment of oil difficult (PTI April 24th 2013).

After more than a year the P5+1 met again in Istanbul in April 2012 as the backchannel still continued. Contrary to their previous encounter in Istanbul a year before, the Iranians (this time around) agreed to discuss the nuclear program. However they continued to insist on their right to enrich. All parties praised the talks, despite the behind scenes drama. Israel and its leadership continued to oppose President Obama's engagement. According to negotiations, the main aim of the meeting after a 15 month gap was to test the willingness of the Iranian leadership to negotiate. The bar for the meeting was low and no concrete progress was made. Obama was publicly condemned, but there was a hope that the meeting would lead to other concrete meetings. Thus, the administration and the P5 furthered 'carrot and stick diplomacy'. The Iranians welcomed the cooperative talks. Iranians also asked for sanction alleviation as it had cooperated with the IAEA (Ernagler 2012).

The tough bargaining continued in the subsequent meetings in Baghdad and Moscow, in May and June 2012, respectively. During the Baghdad meeting, there was a shift in the tone and direction of the Russians, they moved closer to U.S. and E.U. line of thinking when it came to Iran. They demanded a halt to the Iranian nuclear program (Santini and Tabrizi 2012). Washington entered the Baghdad meeting with considerable confidence. Sanctions had a negative impact on the Iranian economy despite Tehran's public bravado. The meeting resulted in no significant sanctions relief, only the easing of restrictions on airplane parts and on technical assistance to Iran's energy industry. Not everyone within the P5+1 were comfortable with Washington's hard bargaining approach. Prior to the meeting, the State Department stated that the P5 had put forward detailed proposal that included confidence-building measures that paved the way for Iran to demonstrate that its nuclear program was for peaceful purposes. The Iranians disagreed with the proposal as it was not in cognizance with the step-by-step approach discussed at

the previous meeting. The revised proposal stated that Iran would have to comply immediately with the UN resolution and halt enrichment (Sahimi 2012 ).

Throughout the negotiation process, the Iranians had often threatened to walk out and even cancel the meetings. There was public pressure on Obama especially those who supported sanctions, this was prior to the U.S. election. Ahead of the Moscow session, forty-four U.S. senators wrote a letter to Obama, calling on him to abandon the talks in absence of a tangible agreement and focus on increasing pressure instead (Parsi 2012a ).

### **From Interim Agreement to a Comprehensive Agreement: The Re-election of Obama and the New Leadership in Iran**

In the midst of the negotiations process, the president was up for re-election. During the election, the Iran nuclear program was a cause for concern among the Republicans. Republican candidates including Mitt Romney emphasized the threat from Tehran, they accused the Obama administration for its passivity and repeatedly reaffirmed their intention ‘to use military action’ to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The biggest problem according to him was the Iranian leadership. During the campaign, Romney stated that he would impose a fifth round of economic sanctions, that targeted the Central Bank of Iran and the business activities of the IRGC, which not only controlled Iran’s nuclear program, but had grown into a multi-billion dollar ‘business empire’ (Hilleary 2012). Romney was at odds with Obama’s efforts to press Israel to avoid any pre-emptive strike before tough Western economic sanctions against Iran had run their course. Romney’s visit to Israel gave him the opportunity to appeal to Jewish voters and pro-Israel evangelical voters in an effort to strike a contrast between himself and Obama (Holland 2012). At one campaign rally Governor Romney stated, “I will enhance our deterrent against the Iranian regime by ordering the regular presence of aircraft carrier task forces, one in the Eastern Mediterranean and one in the Persian Gulf region. I will begin discussions with Israel to increase the level of our military assistance and coordination. And I will again reiterate that Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon is unacceptable”. This was not very different from Obama’s approach. During the

campaign, President Obama continued to reiterate and reaffirm the diplomatic route in dealing with Iran. He stated “ I've been absolutely clear that our policy is not to allow Iran to get a nuclear weapon. We can't afford a nuclear arms race in the region” (Michel and Popovich 2012).

The re-election of President Obama in 2012, was an affirmation that despite the Republican dissatisfaction with the president, Obama and his policies were nevertheless still popular. The president's victory was also a result of Obama's campaigning style and appeal to voters as well as the weakness of the Republican candidate. Though Democrats did not retain the House, they retained a majority in the Senate. In the Senate, they were able to continue their 51 seat hold. In the House, the Republicans won their seats without winning the popular vote. Redistricting or gerrymandering, gave House Republicans an advantage, therefore if the Democrats had to win, they would have had to win in districts won by Romney (Trend 2013). In spite of this, the Democrats were able to pick up 8 House seats and 1 Senate seat. This reinforced their hold over the Senate. The second term additionally heralds a period to push the political boundaries for a incumbent president as it signals his last term in office. However, Obama was confronted by divided government which made the task of pushing boundaries far more arduous.

President's in their second term are usually less constrained politically when it comes to policymaking as they no longer have to run for another election. On the other hand, the second term has its own fault lines. This includes, problems that were postponed from the first term, short-term political strategies that crop-up during second-term create difficulties when presidents wage their reelection campaigns to name a few. The second term often is considered to be disappointment as it does not grant a political honeymoon that most first-term presidents enjoyed. On the other hand, it could offer opportunities especially when it comes to controversial or intractable issues that could jeopardize the president's reelection. These issues can either come back to haunt the administration or offer breathing room for a president to act (Nelson 1998).Therefore,

most presidents tend to push policies that they were afraid of pushing in their first term, Obama was no exception.

The Iran negotiations took on a more serious note as a result of the change in leadership in Iran. The year 2013, signaled new leadership in Iran and the Obama administration's opportunity to take risks, it also signaled a further bend towards bilateral rather than the multilateral approach. In the first half of 2013, from a formal point of view, the gridlock between the two sides continued. Congress and U.S. regional allies continued to keep the pressure on Obama to yield results. The sanction regime had slowed down the Iranian economy but the administration failed to consider the resilience of the Iranian regime. On the other hand, the backchannel route proved far more fruitful. In March 2013, a meeting was set up between Bill Burns and Jake Sullivan in Oman in an effort to test the waters. Puneet Talwar and Robert Einhorn, Jim Timbie (nuclear expert), Richard Nephew (sanction specialist) and Norm Roule (senior advisor on Iran intelligence) met in Oman. Prior to their trip, President Obama held several meetings with Bill Burns and the negotiating team. According to Burn's account, Obama laid out the parameters of the negotiations. This included; "the backchannel was not a substitute for the P5+1", "the bilateral channel would remain a secret", the focus was on the "nuclear issue", explore the possibility for Iran to maintain its "domestic enrichment program" if they were willing to accept tight constraints and "verification" as well as "monitoring arrangements". During the meeting, it became clear that the two sides according to Burns were miles apart. Within the administration, there was a duality of feelings; apprehension as well as hope (Clinton 2014; Burns 2019).

In June 2013, Hassan Rouhani's victory signaled a thaw in the gridlock over the negotiation process. Rouhani was a former nuclear negotiator and asserted that Iran would have a nuclear program but promised greater transparency. In the aftermath of the election, the backchannel with the Omanis received greater impetus under the new leadership. The Sultan of Oman met with Rouhani in an effort to foster the backchannel. President Obama for his part, took advantage of the moment and the change in leadership



and sent a congratulatory message to Rouhani. At a news briefing at the White House, Obama told reporters that the two agreed to direct their negotiating teams to seek a deal over Iran's uranium-enrichment program. Obama stated that "it also indicates(d) the prospect of moving beyond that difficult history." A senior Obama administration official said the tone of the discussion was "cordial," beginning with Obama's opening congratulatory message to Rouhani, "The bulk of the calls focused on the nuclear issue," (Wilson and Lynch 2013). It was also reported, that Obama sent a congratulatory letter to Rouhani, which was received with a great deal of praise from Rouhani. The White House spokesperson Jim Carney, stated that contents of the letter which included a resolution to the nuclear issue (The White House September 2013). In addition to Obama's outreach, Western leaders commented on the difference in the tone under the leadership of Rouhani. Rouhani returned the good faith gesture by stating that the EU officials and Obama sound "different compared to the past." Thus, from the outset it was clear that the leadership on all sides seemed willing to move forward. The rhetoric and the style of both leaders were different in comparison to their predecessors (Carter 2013).

As there was a great deal of time to make up for, the newly elected president hit the ground running. The new leadership in Tehran, displayed an interest in resuming the backchannel. The two sides agreed to meet early in September, prior to the meeting the president's close team of advisors that included the newly appointed Susan Rice as NSC advisor, John Kerry as Secretary of State and others met. The tone of the negotiators had undergone a shift, the biggest challenge to the negotiations was the sanction regime. The next meeting took place on the sidelines of the UNGA. Prior to the convening of the UNGA, the Iranians and Obama's negotiating team which included Burns and Sullivan had brought up the nuclear proposal. These backchannel meetings also set the stage for Kerry's meeting with Foreign Minister Javed Zarif on the sidelines of the UNGA. The members of the Obama inner circle also played a key role in orchestrating a phone conversation between President Rouhani and President Obama which lasted fifteen minutes (Burns 2019).

The P5+1 and Iran, met in October for the first time since the change in the leadership. Secretary of State John Kerry was present at the meeting. Thus, signaling the importance of meeting on the Administration's agenda as well as the role Kerry assumed in the negotiation process. John Kerry as Secretary of State would play an even bigger role in the negotiating process than his predecessor. The P5 along with Iran continued to meet regularly during the latter part of 2013, in an effort to finely tune the agreement (Burns 2019).

On January 12th 2014, the P5+1 announced the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA). Obama hailed the agreement as a victory. Though the agreement had a number of loopholes that had to be ironed out. The agreement nevertheless signaled that Obama's strategy of engagement was a success. The president in a written statement to the E.U. noted that "Now is the time to give diplomacy a chance to succeed". The agreement was tailored to slowdown Iran's nuclear activities for a period of six-months but was extended as negotiations were extended. It was to come into effect on January 20, the deal also entailed sanctions relief. Obama also used this as political leverage against congress. Obama was afraid that additional sanctions could derail the negotiation process. He made it clear that he would veto any legislation on new sanctions. In a statement he reiterated the strategy of sanctions and "tough diplomacy" that were responsible for the agreement. The statement was meant to send a signal to anxious members of Congress as well as Middle East allies that it was "time to give diplomacy a chance" (Arshad Mohammed and Roberta Rampton 2014; Obama January 12 2014).

The drafting of the comprehensive deal began in February 2014. However, though the bilateral meeting continued, a major hurdle had been overcome. Throughout 2014, the P5+1 and Iran held several rounds of meetings, while the IAEA kept a vigilant eye on Iran's nuclear program through its reports as well as inspection, monitoring and verification. For its part, the leadership in Iran continued to comply with the interim agreement, one of the tenets being Iran would reduce their enrichment program until a comprehensive agreement was reached. Obama's core team that had brought the Iranians

to the table, Bill Burns and Jake Sullivan stepped back though they still played an important role. Secretary Kerry played a more active role together with the Wendy Sherman who became the chief negotiator for the U.S. (Burns 2019).

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, the P5+1 and Iran outlined the broad parameters of the comprehensive agreement. President Obama delivered a statement in the Rose Garden stating that this was an “historic” agreement. In his speech the President stated that as ,

*“Commander-in-Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people. And I am convinced that if this framework leads to a final, comprehensive deal it will make our country, our allies, and our world safer”* (Obama April 2015).

He took advantage of the moment and listed the main tenets of the agreement in an effort to silence the opposition and garner domestic support for the upcoming deal as well as perseverance in the continuation of the ‘diplomatic engagement’. The tenets included; first, Iran would not be able to pursue a bomb using plutonium as it would not develop weapons grade plutonium. Second, the deal would put an end to Iran's path to a bomb using enriched uranium. In addition to this, Iran would reduce the number of centrifuges by two thirds. Third, the deal was “the best possible defense against Iran's ability to pursue a nuclear weapon covertly, that is International inspectors would have unprecedented access”. In ending his speech, he reiterated the historicity of the moment and the opportunity vis-a-vis the nuclear program.(Obama April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015). During his speech he echoed the sentiments of his Democratic predecessor President John F. Kennedy inaugural address when it came to negotiation process.

Obama’s euphoria over the possibility of a deal with Iran was clouded by a resurgent Congress. Congress asserted its authority in the decision making process. On April 15th, Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) put forth a resolution Iran Review Act 2015 that required the president to submit the deal to Congress for a vote of approval or disapproval. The Republicans and Democrats in Congress had been weary over the

course of action that the president had taken. There was added on pressure in Congress from Israel and AIPAC that vehemently opposed the negotiations and any deal that allowed Iran to maintain a nuclear program. The legislation passed the Senate 98-1. With the passage of the bill cleared the way for a continuation of negotiations towards a comprehensive deal with little congressional interference (Carney, The Hill July 5th 2015).

Throughout April, May, June and part of July, the American team along with the P5+1 and Iran together with the E.U. hashed out the deal. Deadlines were extended, a great deal of leeway was given to the Iranians in an effort to get them on board. However this strategy was not without risks, especially domestic and international loss of power and prestige. During the various meetings, Kerry attended many of the meetings as well as met with his counterpart Javed Zarif on a bilateral level. Wendy Sherman, was known as a “bare-knuckled dealmaker” with a “no-nonsense demeanor” managed to broker a consensus. She was tasked with informing the P5 allies about the back channel for which the U.S were chastised by the French leadership (Burns 2019 ).

The agreement, was divided into sections and addressed various aspects . The first being the enrichment, research and development as well as stockpiles . The second it addressed the Arak reactor, and other water and reprocessing reactors. The third, transparency and confidence building measures. The fourth, sanctions and the lastly it dealt with the plan to implement the deal in stages as well as withdrawal of sanctions in stages (State Department 2015 ).

### **The Lobbyer-in-Chief: Obama, Congress and Iran Deal**

On July 14th 2015, the Iran deal was signed and stipulated that it would come into force once Iran complied with certain specifications of the JCPOA. On July 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 President Obama announced that the P5+1 and Iran had reached a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that would prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The president stated that it “represents a powerful display of American leadership and

diplomacy”.(The White House 2015). During his speech he also signaled the role that Congress would play in the review process. Obama also made it clear

*“that this deal resolves all the threats that Iran poses to its neighbors or the world...this deal will require many years of implementation and hard work...vigilance and execution...”*. *“As President and as Commander-in-Chief, I am determined to seize that opportunity”*(The White House 2015).

On July 20th the UN adopted Resolution 2231 which endorsed the the JCPOA. It marked a “shift” in the nuclear program of Iran. The resolution also provided for the termination of previous security council resolutions regarding Iran’s nuclear program (UN Res 2231 2015). Therefore, Obama and the members of his administration were successful in negotiating the deal however getting Congress as well as the Middle East allies on board was a whole new ball game.

Lobbying for the deal, began in April 2015, however after July the members of the administration met with members in Congress in an effort to avoid blockage of the deal. The strategy focussed on unifying the Democrats against the Republican therefore the strategy was a partisan approach. As part of the Obama’s campaign for the deal, in August he spoke at the American University and channeled his predecessor President Kennedy who spoke of ‘peace’ in June 1963. Kennedy’s speech focussed on garnering support for his ‘limited nuclear test ban treaty’ a move that was aimed limiting nuclear weapons test. Obama speech focused on the nuclear deal with Iran , the similarities were uncanny (Obama August 5th 2015).

The White House in an effort to garner support for the agreement and dispel controversies as well as disagreement put forth a fact sheet *“What You Need To Know About the JCPOA”* this included the following; Iran would be granted relief only on sanctions pertaining to the nuclear program in the aftermath of the Implementation of the deal (which took place on the 16th January 2016). The primary sanctions included;

U.S. persons prohibited from any transactions dealing with the Government of Iran or financial institutions as well as Iranian persons or entities. Sanctions pertaining to Iran's terrorist activities, through EO 13224 targeted over 50 entities it included; Mahan Air, Bank Saderat, and the IRGC-Qods Force as well as Hezbollah. Sanctions, were also retained on the violation of human rights. Through EO 13606 (April 2012), it targeted persons providing information technology to Iran or Syria that could be used by those governments to commit serious human rights abuses. EO 13553 (September 2010), EO13628 (October 2012), CISADA, and the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (TRA) targeted human rights abuses. The JCPOA exceeded the Lausanne agreement (April 2015) as it included activities that could be used to develop a nuclear bomb as well as IAEA monitoring of the research reactors. In addition to this , Iran was allowed to maintain only light water reactors and was banned from importing highly enriched uranium or plutonium (White House 2015 JCPOA ).

In the aftermath of the deal, members from both parties raised their concerns. As part of the Iran Review Act Congress had the authority to weigh in on the deal, authority that they were willing to use. Soon after the deal was agreed upon, Congress and AIPAC began its campaign against the deal, the White House as well began its campaign to block the Republicans from voting against the deal. In an effort to do so , Obama and the members of his administration had to first convince Democrats. Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz who played a key role in the negotiations with Iran, Wendy Sherman the chief negotiator appeared before Congress to rally behind the deal. For his part the President along with the Democratic leadership worked to gain support. Obama was well aware of the fact that to counter the onslaught from the Republicans the Democrats had to be united .

Secretary John Kerry, Secretary Moniz and Secretary Lew appeared before Congress in part to explain the benefits of the deal. The discussion between the members of the Foreign Relations Committee were heated. The lifting of sanctions was the main bone of contention as well as the fact that the agreement should be put to a

congressional vote. Both Moniz and Kerry reiterated the tenets of the deal. Moniz addressed the verification process by the IAEA. Kerry reiterated the reduction of Iran's stock piles by 98% . Kerry also stated that Iran at the time when the negotiations began had sufficient uranium to build about 12 bombs. He also discussed the alternatives to the deal as well as the ramifications if the U.S. were not party to the deal. The Discussions got heated when Republicans began to question the administration and 'American interests'(CHRG July 28th 2015).

Secretary Carter, Secretary Kerry and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Dempsey appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee in an effort to garner support for the deal. Dempsey broke with the president on sanctions and their alleviation. (cite from armed services committee). Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter raised doubts regarding the success of a military strike which should be a last resort. General Martin Dempsey - Chairman of the JCS, agreed that a negotiated deal was preferred option as a opposed a military strike against but reiterated that the military option was on the table if all other options failed (CHRG July 29 2015). The hearings were one way in which Kerry campaigned for the deal. The 'going public' strategy was an attempt to influence Americans who in turn would influence their representatives. Kerry conducted interviews with an array of people, organizations as well as media outlets that ranged from the U.S. Press to Israeli press, as well as the Arab press in an effort to stall the Republicans.

There were others who supported the deal, in an open letter, three dozen retired U.S. generals and admirals reiterated the necessity of a diplomatic solution in a letter. The CIA Director John O. Brennan supported the Iran agreement, one that focussed on sanctions that compelled Iran to accept the deal. The Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper also signaled approval of the JCPOA as it grated intelligence gathering of Iran's complete nuclear program (Shank 2015).

In the U.S., 29 scientists with top-secret clearances strongly endorsed the deal, as it could advance peace and security in the Middle East. The deal has a number of

positives which included long-term verification (until 2040) as well as others last indefinitely under the NPT and its Additional Protocol. Among those who supported the deal, there were six Nobel laureates, the scientist that directed the Los Alamos weapons laboratory, a physicist who helped design the world's first hydrogen bomb, and another who was uncharge of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest general scientific society (Shank 2015).

On October 18th 2015, in spite of the opposition to the JCPOA, the president announced the adoption of the deal. In the the memorandum to the State, Treasury, Commerce and Energy he reiterated the “the prompt and effective implementation” of the JCPOA. The memo further stated “ I hereby direct you to take all necessary steps to give effect to the U.S. commitments with respect to sanctions described in section 17 of Annex V of the JCPOA” (The White House October 2015).

### **The Iran Deal: Obama and Enforcement of the Deal**

On the 17th January 2016, President Obama officially announced that the Iran Deal has been implemented. This was especially after Iran adhered to the stipulations of the JCPOA. As part of Iran’s compliance the president waived off sanctions as per the JCPOA. On January 16th, the IAEA verified that Iran had fulfilled. The necessary requirements under the deal and gave ensured that the nuclear program would be “peaceful”. In order for the deal to come to fruition, Iran shipped out 25,000 pounds of enriched uranium; dismantled two-thirds of the centrifuges and provided “unprecedented” access to its nuclear facilities (The White House 2016a).The Department of Treasury announced the impositions of sanctions against 11 people and companies that were involved with the ballistic missiles program. There was a great deal of suspicion regarding the timing of the implementation. In the aftermath of implementation, Obama announced the new sanctions on Iran seemed very in tune with the Reaganesque approach of dealing with Iran. Treasury officials stated that the U.S. “will vigorously press sanctions” against Iran on other fronts as a result of Tehran’s support for terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missile program (Korte 2016a).



The president signed an EO that revoked a 20 year system of sanctions against Iran. The EO stated that as Iran complied with the JCPOA, the U.S. revoked EO 13574 of May 23, 2011, EO 13590 of November 20, 2011, EO 13622 of July 30, 2012, and EO 13645 of June 3, 2013, and amended EO 13628 of October 9, 2012 (The White House 2016b ).

With the implementation of the JCPOA, the U.S. lifted nuclear-related sanctions as well as retained the authority to snap-back sanctions if Iran were to go against the deal or cheat or even walk away from the JCPOA or begin enrichment beyond 3.75% stipulated in the agreement. As Iran's destabilizing activities were of great concern to most members in Congress as well as the general public, the President through EO 13224. Throughout the various phases of the negotiation process it became clear that the administration was focussed on the nuclear related issues alone, though Iran's support for organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah were of a concern , they were a greater concern for members of congress who through the hearings and. Resolutions brought it up constantly.

### **Presidential Pre-Eminence or Presidential Acquiescence: Barack Obama and Iran**

President Obama in negotiating with Iran, made an unprecedented move of providing the Iranian leadership with an an olive branch without any preconditions. It was the first time since the revolution, that the U.S. was willing to negotiate directly with public knowledge. The initial strategy was focussed on direct diplomacy however the president had to change his tactics and adopt a dual-track strategy. This focussed on diplomacy coupled with sanctions. The president was willing albeit at times grudgingly to move towards imposing sanctions. Along with the P5, he was able to get Russian and China on board with sanctions with the help of his team.

The backchannel emerged when Iran took Americans hostage and members of the presidents team as well as Kerry worked towards their release (Burns 2019). The Omani channel, which was more of a bilateral engagement rather than the multilateral route

proved to be a starting ground that the P5 would eventually build on. The reasons behind Obama's move towards the backchannel were simple, the P5 had proved to be fruitless. Secondly; Iran continued to enrich uranium at 20% and third the only other option was one centered around the military which Obama though stated was on the table, was ambivalent to make use of. The administration kept the knowledge of the backchannel restricted to a few trusted advisors. With the backchannel, Obama displayed a willingness to explore every avenue possible in an effort to engage with Iran. Those in charge of the various meetings were cautious of the repercussions and treaded with care.

Obama often felt hamstrung by the Congress and even the external allies like China, Russia as well as the Middle East. When it came to Iran, his team of advisors were able to get China and Russia on board with the sanctions as well as with the deal. Though the Middle East allies were not involved in the negotiations, they were the ones that would be directly affected by Iran's behavior. The Saudis and Israeli attempted to corner Obama at every stage of the negotiation process. The final result, Netanyahu condemned the deal in its entirety and worked with Republicans in Congress to undermine the deal and in doing so the President altogether.

Obama was more of an "accommodationist" than a realist. He sought a more permanent reconciliation with American authoritarian adversaries than just a U.S. respite from global responsibilities in the aftermath of the "ill-advised" Iraq war. Obama's foreign policy tended to be far more conciliatory than Nixon's and Kissinger's détente, he was not an isolationist and attempted to focus on America's vital interest and responsibilities more expansively than Jefferson's isolationism. He was also unlike Washington's "non entanglement", or Jackson's "assertive, nationalistic version". His staunch commitment to multilateralism mirrored Carter. Like Carter, Obama also tried to reduce America's military commitments abroad specifically in Iraq. Like Carter, Obama also anguished about the use of force, employing it rarely, for limited goals, usually with limited means. Like Clinton, Obama pressed for a blanket nuclear non-proliferation, punishing violators regardless of the internal character of their regime. Obama and

Clinton negotiated with rogue states like Iran and North Korea. He was also not a proponent of American exceptionalism akin to Reagan's public diplomacy to wage war against the legitimacy of the Soviet regime. Obama was more ambivalent about America's uniqueness or benevolence. Unlike Obama, Reagan and Bush largely agreed on the first principles of American foreign policy, including democratic regime change as a prudent aim when the regime of America's adversary constituted the root cause of the conflict. Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, is the figure in contemporary American politics who champions a foreign policy and national security strategy most closely aligned with the main tenets of the Obama Doctrine. He revived a tradition of minimalism, a reluctance to use force, and a non-ideological, narrow definition of the national interest that the Republican Party abandoned after Dwight D. Eisenhower (Kaufman 2016).

President Obama was accused by his critics of 'leading from behind'. This was especially during the crisis in Libya. In the matter of the JCPOA, the president exhibited a great deal of control over the negotiation process. There were times during the negotiation process wherein Congress asserted its authority this was especially in the case of imposing additional sanctions as well as through the Iran Review Act as well as when it came to expansion of sanctions. In spite of congressional reassertion, the president and the executive branch were able to have complete control over the negotiation process. Through a series of EOs, the president expanded U.S. sanctions on Iran. However, for Obama expanding sanctions was a strategic move in his dual-track policy towards Iran

The Iran deal was neither an executive agreement nor a treaty by design and by virtue of the fact that it was a political agreement. The president did not have the authority to waive sanctions subject to congressional review. The president also lacked authority to act unilaterally make a legally binding commitment, the reason being the lack of domestic opposition. The non-binding agreement backed by presidential authority to suspend sanctions gave the President the advantage of asserting his role in the sanction policy. Congress interjected its role, through the Iran Review Act that was passed

overwhelming, it stipulated that the deal was subject to Congressional review. This meant that whether Congress voted in favor of the agreement or abstained the deal would still go into effect but if Congress disapproves it could be stopped. It was here where partisan politics played an important role (Peake 2018).

Obama embarked on a personal campaign in an effort to lobby Democrats to save the Iran Deal. With the Republican controlled congress ready vote against the deal, the president was apprehensive and rightfully so that the Senate would against the agreement. President Obama invited Democrats to the White House Situation Room for a meeting on the Iran Deal. He made personal phone calls to Democrats as well as classified briefings. (French and Bresnahan 2015).

The Senate Democrats were able to form a coalition and block the resolution disapproving the Iran nuclear deal, handing President Obama a major political victory. 42 Democrats voted and only 4 Senate Democrats defected. The main argument in coxing his party was that the deal offered the best chance at preventing a nuclear Iran. For the Democrats to support the president, it was a difficult choice as many of their donors as well as their constituencies are made up of Jews that support Israel and fear Iran. In an effort to garner support for the deal and quell the opposition, the president sent out members of the administration to rally support, they welcomed hearing in order to present its point of view. Secretary of State John Kerry and Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz met often with senators to assuage their concerns over the arcane details of the agreement. Moniz estimated that about 30 Democratic senators visited his office (Bolton 2015).

President Obama at times was able to dominate foreign policy making. However, as for most of his presidency government was divided with a fierce opposition to his foreign policy initiatives made it difficult for him to be the pre-eminent decision maker. On the other hand, when it came to keeping up with the negotiation process with Iran the President Obama and his administration displayed their resilience as well as patience. During the course of the Obama's presidency the Republican-controlled Congress created

road blocks for his policies such as the reset with Russia, the rebalance to the Asia Pacific, engagement with Iran and finally the opening up to Cuba.

## **Chapter IV**

### **ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE**

#### **Congressional Deference and Assertiveness in the Case of Obama's Strategy Towards Iran**

*“As members of Congress, we may disagree with the administration's position on foreign policy matters, but the fact remains: the Executive Branch is tasked with handling diplomatic matters”*

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*Rep. Marcia Fudge ( D-OH 11th)*

## **Introduction**

As discussed in the chapter I, Congress is an important influential factor in presidential leadership as well as a president's ability to dominate the foreign policy process. By virtue of the Constitution, Congress wields a great deal of power, however members of Congress have at times asserted their authority and at others have acquiesced their authority. Their authority reins supreme in matters pertaining to domestic rather than foreign policy, nevertheless Congress has played an important role to play; one based on shared powers as well as checks and balances.

Since the end of the Cold War, foreign and domestic policy has become increasingly intermestic. Congress in the aftermath of the Cold War has become far more assertive and defiant of the role the president should play in foreign policy. This included use of force, engagement abroad and more importantly in the economic aspects of foreign policy such as trade, sanctions etc (James and O'neal 1991).

This chapter will address President Obama's relationship with Congress, in terms of congressional assertion and deference. Prior to the midterm election 2010, Obama had to face a Congress controlled by the Democrats which made it easier to pass legislation as well as gain support in matters pertaining to foreign engagement and tone down the criticism against the president. However from 2010-2017 Obama was faced with a divided government made up of highly partisan Republicans who were unwilling to compromise.

Through the bill and resolutions as well as debates, the chapter will attempt to understand the role played by Congress in Obama's policy towards Iran.

## **Hyper-Partisanship and the Swinging of the Proverbial Pendulum**

During the Cold War, an era of bipartisanship gave rise to deferential Congress in matters pertaining to foreign policy. Thus, Congress signed a blank check when it came to defense spending as well as covert activities that were more centralized. Thus, Congress was considered an active with spouts of defiance. In the aftermath of the

Vietnam War , Congress became more assertive and defiant began. This assertiveness was always not in tune with the president rather an opposition to, thus curtailing the predominance of the president in matters of foreign policy. This was especially true with the passage of the WPR over presidential veto. The relations between the Democrats as well as Republicans and Congress and the President was defined in terms of bipartisanship and partisanship. Over a period of time, the polarization in Congress began to increase and partisanship became the order of the day. Partisanship was seen more specifically on issues pertaining to foreign policy. The era partisanship was defined but the evaporation of the moderates on both sides of the aisle. It was also the end of cross party voting wherein Democrats voted with Republicans and vice versa (Flesher and Bond 2000).

Partisan polarization during the Clinton administration reached the apex with the budget battles between Clinton and Gingrich. It was also during the Clinton years that Congress reasserted itself, this also created a gridlock between the parties as well as between the branches of government. Bipartisanship once again returned to the forefront of the decision making process. This was evident during the War on Terror. Congress gave President Bush a blank cheque in the form of the the two wars (Afghanistan and Iraq), as well as expanding the federal government in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. In addition this, Bush was given a great deal of leeway when it came to wartime expenditure and troop increases. The deference granted by Congress during the Bush years gave the president insurmountable powers that raise the question of the return of the 'imperial presidency'.

When President Obama was elected to the presidency, he attempted to appeal to bipartisan rather than partisan rancor. However, his policies were passed on party lines, which made bipartisanship impossible. Therefore, in such a political environment, political scientist, presidential and congressional scholars called the period; hyper-partisanship. President Obama, had a full foreign policy and domestic policy agenda that required a great deal of support for it to come to fruition. In matters pertaining to foreign



policy Obama, wanted to display restraint and a consideration for Congress's role. But on the other hand was willing to use the Constitution as well as the loopholes in an effort to achieve his foreign policy goals.

The election of Obama signaled unified government, the Democrats strengthened their hold in the both Houses of Congress. They picked up 21 seats in the House. The magnitude of the victory was daunting which made passing their agenda important for political survival (Sinclair 2011). During the Obama presidency, the president found it difficult to work with Congress in the aftermath of the 2010 midterms when the House changed hands and once again with the 2014 election when both Houses were controlled by the Republicans. Therefore, Obama had to tread cautiously.

In fact in negotiating the New START and repealing "Don't Ask Don't Tell", Congress played a significant role in ratifying them. The numerous policies put forward by the president were met with Republican opposition in most cases it was partisan politics that played a role rather than the president's policies. For the Republicans in Congress after the 2010 midterm, the aim was to thwart the Obama administration's agenda in an effort to thwart his re-election (Thurber 2013). In the aftermath of his re-election the president who is often considered a lame duck usually takes considerable risk in the policies he wants to pass. A president is often afforded the latitude to use his political capital as an election is no longer on the table. In Congress, the Democrats were able to strengthen their numbers in both Houses marginally.

Congressional leadership is an important tool for the president to pass his agenda. The Democratic leaders of the 111th Congress were Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leaders Harry Reid to name a few. President Obama's legislative standing in Congress was far stronger than predecessors like Bill Clinton and even to some extent John Kennedy as he did not have to deal with Southern Conservative Democrats. Obama found favor with his party committee chairs especially after Republican control found it easier to work with a Democratic president. Obama was also respectful of the role that Congress played in the legislative process, however exploited

the partisanship when bi-partisanship became unattainable. Therefore, the administration would draw up broad proposals and delegate the details to his party in Congress as they controlled Congress. This strategy especially pertained to legislation such as healthcare, climate change, however this changed after the 2010 midterms. Obama's chief of staff, Rahm Emmanuel who had held various portfolios in Congress especially worked with top ranking Democrats, was of great use to Obama when it came to measuring the pulse of congress as well as in garnering support of members of the Congress. In an effort to work with Congress, the president like his predecessors employed an array of strategies which included lunches and meetings of Democrats as well as Republicans (Sinclair 2011 Owens 2011).

Obama campaigned on the idea of 'post-partisan presidency' however, his policies ignited a partisan war that required the Democrats to unite in an effort to save the legislative agenda of the president. Many of Obama's campaign promises, like government involvement in health care, education, the environment, and alternative energy were part of the Democratic agenda. In an effort for his agenda to reach fruition, he appealed to Republicans but more so to Democrats. Therefore, he was walking a fine line. Obama often found himself "vilified by the right, castigated by the left and abandoned by the middle". Obama's political difficulties stemmed from his efforts to reconcile two competing approaches; "venerable executive" defined as a nonpartisan leadership on the one hand and an "emergent style" wherein partisanship played an important role on the other. At times he adopted a non-partisan approach and at other times he vacillated between partisanship and bipartisanship. Though Obama was concerned over partisan polarization that eroded the faith of Americans in politics, there was nothing that he really could do. In a joint session to Congress, the president insisted that the economic and social difficulties facing the nation were due in large part to the failed policies and ideology of the previous administration. However, a nonpartisan attitude was short lived as a result of Republican obstructionism (Milkis, Rhodes, and Charnock 2012). As senator, Obama unlike President Carter realized from the beginning that his success as a legislator depended on his party in Congress. He may have wanted to

be the post-partisan president, but partisan votes were important. Therefore, Obama made it a point to have strong relations with the leadership in Congress.

Obama's electoral success in 2008 was not considered a landslide, he won about 52.7% of the popular vote. However, the perceptions of his victory were magnified which made it seem as though it was a landslide. This effect empowered him and his mandate. Even the coattails were not as long as his predecessors (President Johnson). Most Democratic Senators that won, ran ahead of Obama the exceptions being Colorado, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oregon, and New Jersey. When it came to agenda setting, control and execution, the Democratic leadership was well in toe with the president. Though it was tougher to pass his agenda in the Senate, as a result of Senate rules and the filibuster, the leadership worked harder to accomplish passing his agenda. Though he campaigned on the idea of a post-partisan presidency, it became clear quickly, that Republican support would be hard to come by. The Democrats along with Obama and his team, hit the ground running. At times, Obama had trouble in rallying his own party, this was especially true with the troop surge in Afghanistan. Speaker Nancy Pelosi had worked very hard to gain support from colleagues to support the surge, however she also made it clear that Obama would have to take his case to the American people. The president also found it difficult to rally the moderates and the liberals especially moderates in states where he lost (Edwards 2012). The troop surge in Afghanistan had support from the Republicans.

In working with both sides of Congress, the president, used a familiar tactic of wooing the Republicans. Obama in the first few months of his presidency attempted to prove that he was the post-partisan president. He reached across the aisle with Republicans, he held meetings with the Republican leadership as well as Republicans whose support was required on legislation. He held meetings with Pelosi and Reid in an effort to get them on board with his proposals. His chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel, reiterated the willingness of the president to work with members of the GOP. He sort John McCain's advise on matters pertaining to national security, though this was an

attempt at good faith. He sent top aids to coddle Senators and Representatives. He met congressman on an individual level as well as at social occasions, especially when he invited them to lunches at the White House and football games. In spite of emptying a wide range of tactics, he was not successful in gaining their support for his legislative agenda. An additional way of gaining support in Congress especially with reference to the Affordable Healthcare Act and the stimulus package, were the use of summits and luncheons, the president sent letters to Republicans addressing their concerns. When it became clear that bipartisanship was not going to succeed, the White House began to scale back its effort. However, time and again the president made attempts at gaining bipartisan support but in vain. In 2010, Obama and the Democrats were dealt a heavy blow, in the special election for Senator of the state of Massachusetts to replace the late Sen. Edward Kennedy. The loss of the seat (to a Republican), rendered a defeat for the Democrats to filibuster in the senate. In 2010, the president held weekly meetings on spending and the need for bipartisan deficit reduction (Edwards 2012).

When Obama took office in 2009 government was unified with the White House and both Houses of Congress in the hands of the Democrats. In the House of Representatives the Democrats dominated with 255-179. In the senate the Democrats occupied 56 seats while the Republicans occupied the remaining 42 seats. It was during the first two years that of his presidency and his democratic allies worked together and compiled a substantial legislative record. This was especially focussed on the domestic foreign policy front. The 2010 midterm election wherein the Republicans and more so the ultra- conservative wing of the GOP that is the Tea Party gained ground. This forced the administration to go beyond Party control. The problem with Obama's domestic agenda was favored by moderates and liberals and for most part excluded the conservatives. Thus, it failed to achieve bipartisan consensus. A similar case was seen in the 1994 midterm which was an even bigger loss for the Democrats. Ironically for Obama , who wanted to move beyond party line, beyond red and blue America catered to blue America rather than the conservatives. This battle became fierce during the debate over health care reform. There are arguments to suggest that the even if Obama was not

partisan the Republicans were and were unwilling to meet the Democrats half way. During his first years in office, his legislative proposals won 86-93% of House votes and 75-98% of Senate votes. The average success rates for other presidents, who like him, benefited from majority control were 77.5% in the House and 73.9% in the Senate. Presidential support from the Democrats was high which resulted in greater number of votes when his party controlled Congress. The House, is considered more partisan than the Senate, therefore Obama's victory was expected given the context. On the other hand, he made greater gains in the Senate (Cohen, Bond Fleisher 2013).

On matters pertaining to domestic policy the Democrats though apprehensive of the extensive and ambitious agenda, President Obama was able to push his agenda prior to the midterm, this included a vast stimulus package as well as the controversial Affordable Healthcare Reform Act (Galston 2010). The stimulus package included some tax cuts that pleased the GOP but they were minuscule in terms of the demands the GOP had made. Healthcare reform was an area that Obama wanted bipartisanship this meant at times alienating the Democrats. The Healthcare debate used much of his political capital. However the debate ignited a partisan war that ended with a partisan victory rather than bipartisanship. From a legislative perspective, it was considered one of the most productive congresses much like the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress that enacted Johnson's Great Society . The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress oversaw the passage of the largest stimulus package in an effort to aid the economic meltdown, health care reform that was controversial among democrats as well as Republicans, tax relief and at the foreign policy level; sanctions on Iran. However, Obama seemed more assertive with respect to Congress during his second term.

On the foreign policy front, there were numerous battles waged these included the wars in Afghanistan as well as Iraq to begin with specifically the troop surge in Afghanistan and the troop withdrawal in Iraq. As time went on, the partisan war extended to the president's strategy of engagement; this included allies as well as adversaries. Obama's handling of the Arab Spring Libya and Syria came under fire by

Republicans. There were times that congressional members were assertive while at other times they deferred to the president. In matters pertaining to Obama's military actions abroad as well as his brand of engagement with friend and foe created a great deal of bipartisan concern. This bipartisan concern was evident with the military action in Libya in 2011. There were many that stated it violated the War powers Act. The president for his part maintained his constitutional prerogative over matters pertaining to foreign affairs. However, the administration's line of defense was that most of the day-to-day control of the mission was under NATO. In addition to this, Obama had stated earlier in the conflict that U.S. troops would not be involved and had maintained that fact (Wilson 2011).

When it came to war powers and congressional assertion, Obama believed that Congress was required to play an important role. As Senator, his opinion over war powers was mostly in terms of challenging the overuse of presidential powers. Obama also sponsored a Senate resolution that had it passed would have forbidden "offensive" military action by the president against Iran. Within weeks of his inauguration, Congress would witness Obama's foreign policy direction. This came in the form of the troop surge in Afghanistan. In this endeavor there was bipartisan support for the president's policies. Though there were many in Congress that were skeptical the House passed the bill with a 308 to 114. More Republicans than Democrats supported Obama's surge. The Democrats were divided and had stalled the strategy (Cornwell 2010b).

On the matter of troop withdrawal in Iraq, there was a great deal of public support for the president's withdrawal from Iraq. Once again there were many in Congress that were skeptical, however the Democrats supported the president's intention. This included Sen. Richard Durbin, Democrat and a close Obama ally. However, he also stated the need "to strike the right balance between ending the war and maintaining stability in Iraq". In the aftermath of the White House meeting on troop withdrawal, Rep. John McHugh, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, stated that Obama had assured him that the withdrawal plan would be revisited if the situation in Iraq deteriorated (Politico 2009).

On the matter pertaining to Syria, in 2013, Obama faced fierce criticism. Congress demanded that president get authorization on action in Syria. Obama was ambivalent on proceeding with action against Syria. Though Obama believed it was well within his ‘constitutional prerogative’ to act in Syria against Assad’s use of chemical weapons. The president pledged to get congressional authorization prior to the use of force against Syria. This pleased the rank and file especially the Republicans in Congress. However, Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), stated that “The president does (did) not need Congress to authorize a strike on Syria. If Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians deserves a military response, and I believe it does, and if the president is seeking congressional approval, then he should call Congress back into a special session at the earliest date.” (Miller 2013). In an effort to assert itself, the Senate introduced a Joint Resolution S.J 21. The bill authorized the president to use the armed forces. However, Congress stipulated that presidential power was to be used “in a limited and specified manner against legitimate military targets in Syria’ and only in the case of WMD’s, to deter Syria’s use and capacity of these weapons in an effort to protect allies and prevention of weapons transfer to non-state entities (S.J. Res 21 2013).

However, the Russians intervened in an effort to broker peace. The pressure over the vote in Congress intensified was clear that they would lose in the House and face an uphill battle in the Senate. In addition to this, senators expressed wariness over dealing with Russia. The hawks in the senate like Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) stated that the agreement with the Russians was “meaningless” and argued to provide greater aid to the opposition forces in Syria. Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Bob Corker (R-TN) stated that the agreement was “unclear” as to dealing with Assad and the need for use of force. The use of force was also supported by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) (Everett 2013).

There was a great deal of criticism from Congress throughout the Obama administration on his inaction in Syria. This was especially true when it came to ISIS.

Apatite in Congress for Obama's policy towards ISIS was waning thin. In February 2015, the White House sent Congress a proposal for the authorization of use of force against IS. The Republicans seemed in no hurry to vote on the AUMF. In seeking authorization the president empowered Congress. The president's proposal was engineered to get war weary Democrats to vote in favor of the proposal. However the Republicans wanted a more substantial piece of legislation. On the other hand by refusing to vote on the piece of legislation, Congress acquiesced to the president. There were many in Congress who believed that the AUMF was a 'good faith gesture' on the part of the president as the Iran deal was another battle that the president would require to fight (Berman 2015b). The Syrian crisis and the impending War with ISIS detracted the president and Congress from dealing with Iran. Obama followed a 'wait and see' approach.

Though Obama attempted to attract Republicans by incurring the wrath of the Democrats it was not enough. The 2010 midterm elections, were a strong signal to the President, his administration as well as his politics. The budget was accepted in early April 2009— with most of its major spending priorities intact—but without a single Republican vote in either the House or the Senate. Obama made use of partisan maneuvers in an effort to set the parameters for the debate on the budget. There were meetings held between the President and Republicans to the dismay of liberal Democrats. In the debate over the budget, Democrats were upset as they felt that Obama sold them out and Republicans felt Obama was partisan.

### **An Assertive Congress: The Iranian Presidential Elections, The Crackdown and The Imposition of Sanctions on Iran**

In the case of Iran, there were two areas wherein Congress played an important role the first being sanctions and the second - the reviewing the deal. In both these areas the president as well as the administration together with Democratic leadership allies played an important role in lobbying support for the president's strategy. This was not to say that these were the only two ways in which Congress asserted itself pertaining to Iran. Throughout the course of the negotiations, the arguments made both for and against the



negotiations were shaped by a bipartisanship in Congress. The members of Congress were apprehensive about Obama's strategy this was more on the Republican side rather than the Democrats. The Democrats as expected were more supportive of Obama's policy rather than the Republicans.

During the hearings held in the first few months of the administration, there was bipartisan apprehension on the president's course of action. This was especially true when William Burns who served on the Bush Administration as well as the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the hearings held on the Hill in congruence with Iran cautioned Congress on Iran. The members of Congress outlined and reiterated time and again Iran's troubling position in matters pertaining to the region. This was especially true with respect to Saudi and Israel. The other aspect that concerned Congress was the 'use of force'. During the hearings, members of Congress were more in tune with 'stick diplomacy' rather than the use of 'carrots' (CHRG 2009 ). Eventually it was Congress that pressurized Obama to move the P5 towards imposing sanctions. This as especially true when the the P5 failed in their negotiations in Geneva and Vienna.

There was a great deal of hope within the Obama White House especially since he extended the olive branch. This was coupled with the 2009 elections in Iran and the hope for a moderate government that was more receptive to Washington's overtures. The hope of engagement was dashed not only with the re-election of Ahmadinejad but the subsequent crackdown that took place. This in fact interfered with the administration's strategy of engagement. The election results revealed discrepancies which incited protests. In response to the protests there were a series of crackdowns that received worldwide condemnation. Despite this, the Obama administration was slow in its reaction towards the crackdown. Congress on the other hand was more assertive in their support for democratic reform in Iran. The Republicans, who were apprehensive about the negotiation process took this as an opportunity and moved against President Obama's 'rapprochement'. They called for the immediate suspension of current strategy and imposition of sanctions. The delayed response angered many in Congress, to them it

seemed as though the president was willing to sacrifice 'U.S. ideals' of democracy for the sake of improving relations with Iran. Congress as well as the international community condemned the attacks on the protestors as they were against democratic principles. The House controlled by the Democrats took pre-emptive action in support of the protectors. On June 19 2009, they put forward H.Res. 560, which expressed support for Iranian citizens the bill:

*“condemns(ed) the ongoing violence against demonstrators by the Government of Iran and pro-government militias, as well as the ongoing government suppression of independent electronic communication”* (H.Res. 560 2009).

It was approved by 405 lawmakers, Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) voted against it. The reason behind this was he was “cautious in condemning actions of governments overseas” Additionally, Reps. Brad Ellsworth (D-IN) and Dave Loebsack, (D-IA), “voted present”. The resolution was put forth by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman, (D-CA), along with two Republicans, Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) and House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA). The president though was troubled by the violence did not want to create additional problems in his strategy of rapprochement. Sen. John Kerry stated that Washington should avoid taking sides in the elections (CNN June 19, 2009). The passage of the bill by the House displayed the willingness of the Democrats to go against the president.

In addition to the House passing the legislation, the Senate also passed measures S.Res. 193, S.Res.196, S.Res. 355 and S.Res. 386 which expressed support for Iranian citizens who “embrace(ed) freedom, human rights, civil liberties and rule of law”. It expressed the “Sense of the Senate” on matters pertaining “to freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression”. In doing so, the U.S. Congress shored up support to enhance the opposition’s prospects (S.Res.196 2009;S.Res 193 2009; Addis 2009). Thus, unlike the president who wanted to remain a non-partisan actor in the

situation, Congress was playing sides, one that the Obama administration was fearful would impede engagement.

For Washington, the appearance of a fraudulent election followed by the crackdown was a dual question which encompassed morality as well stability for Iran and region. Thus, the momentum for sanctions in Congress grew considerably as a result of the election fraud. The president at first attested to dial down congressional need to impose sanction. However, there was a fear that the president would not be able to hold off the hawks within the Republican Party who were increasingly pushing Obama to act. Thus, with limited political space and maneuverability it constrained the president's decision making. There was a hardening of the political climate in Washington as well as in Iran. Therefore, skepticism in Congress only grew and made it difficult for Obama to sell his policy on Iran to Congress (Parsi 2012a).

Congress put forth additional bills in support of the protestors and the democratic process. Within the FY2010 Defense Authorization, Section C pertained to U.S. engagement with Iran, "the report on military power of Iran" and the "sense of Congress on imposing sanctions on Iran". The military power involved the ballistic missile defense against Iranian missiles. Furthermore, it also dealt with the "Victims of Iranian Censorship (VOICE) Act". Subtitle D, contained provisions "to penalize companies that sold Iran equipment that could have been used to suppress or monitor the internet usage of Iranians" (PL FY2010 Defense Authorization ).

Other legislative initiatives included sanctions on the regime. The Iran Human Rights Sanctions Act (S. 3022). The bill was introduced by Sen John McCain (R-AZ). It directed the president to "impose restrictions on visa entry and financial sanctions on a person determined to be complicit with violations of human rights on or after June 12, 2009, regardless of whether such abuses occurred in Iran" (S.3022, 2010). In addition to this, the Iran Democratic Transition Act of 2010 (S. 3008) was introduced by Sen John Cornyn (R-TX). It authorized "the president to support the transition to a freely elected democratic government in Iran by providing eligible Iranian democratic opposition

organizations”. The undertone of the resolution was to express support for the overthrow of the regime. It was introduced on February 11, 2010 (S.3008 2010; Katzman 2010).

Members of Congress went to the extent of holding hearings in an effort to discuss the future of ‘Obama’s engagement strategy’. Presidents Obama’s response or lack thereof worried members in Congress as well as the general public. This haunted the President well into the the election of 2012 as well as 2016 when Republicans like Marco Rubio condemned Obama for his inaction. During the hearings in the House, the members of Congress were concerned as to the way in which the internal developments would impact the negotiation process as well as engagement with Iran pertaining to the nuclear program. Members of Congress re-introduced the ‘Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act’, that was put on hold so as to provide room for negotiations. During the congressional hearings, Dr Abbas Milani addressed the use of millions of dollars by the government in support of Hamas, Hezbollah and even Syria. Michael Rubin stated that for engagement to work, diplomats would have to be empowered. Diplomacy together with military and economic components had to be integrated. Suzanne Maloney of the Brookings Institute advocated a cautious policy given that the players in Iran were uncertain. The focus of her testimony was on the Iranian economy, the oil economy that had been fruitful to Ahmadinejad’s policies also there had been a slump in the economy which was part of the protests. For the U.S. a military option was fraught with consequences. In an effort to negotiate, the U.S. would have to step up its dialogue with China and Russia. Additionally, the U.S. would have to adjust its policy as and when required thus policy would have to be flexible. Dr Sadjadpour, stated that Iran had become a “cartel of hardline Revolutionary Guardsmen” and “hardline clergymen”. Obama’s policy of engagement created divisions within Iran as well. In addition to this, he supported the idea of tabling engagement. Maloney also advised against a military attack which would be counterproductive. Orde F. Kittrie Professor of Law, Arizona State University and Co-Director Iran Energy Project, Foundation For Defense of Democracies listed ways in which Congress could reassert itself this included, the ‘Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act’ (IRPSA) for immediate enactment. Secondly, Congress also

were advised to take steps to squeeze Iran's suppliers of refined petroleum and other strategic goods. Third while IRPSA was considered an appropriate bill, it was also considered insufficient. It did not address a complete cut-off on Iran's refined petroleum supplies there were a number of provisions in other Iran sanction bills that urged passing. Therefore, alongside the passage of IRPSA other provisions such as those in H.R. 1327- Iran Sanctions Enabling Act of 2009 that encouraged and facilitated State and local divestment from companies doing business with Iran (HR 1327 2009). In addition to this, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana (R-FL) the ranking member put forward the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2009 (H.R. 1208), it amended the Iran Freedom Support Act to maintain specified U.S. sanctions with respect to Iran until the president certified that Iran had dismantled its weapons of mass destruction programs and ceased support for international terrorism. It also discouraged and reduced the trans-shipment of sensitive goods to Iran by third countries. However, these resolutions were introduced in either the House or the Senate but were never passed. In addition to these resolutions, there was an additional resolution proposed by Rep Kirk and Rep. Sherman that would prohibit U.S. export-import banks from providing loans, encouraging the Executive branch as well as local governments to use discretion when it comes to contractors and beneficiaries of loans etc. Adding to this, H.R. 1327 to "encouraged and aided local companies from doing business with Iran". HR 2375 invigorated "sanctions on the IRGC". The Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Designation Implementation Act, "directed the president to identified specified sanctions against: foreign persons or entities affiliated to the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)" as well as strengthening the Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2009 (H.R. 1208) and the Iran Sanctions Act (CHRG July 2009, H.R 2375 2009; H.R. 1208 2009; H.R.1327 2009).

Though there were many in Congress skeptical about imposition of additional sanctions that could derail the engagement process, there were a larger number that felt in the aftermath of the crackdown sanctions were an important tool. In an effort to be seen and heard but not always taken into account, Congress attempted to assert itself through the FY2010 budget. Through S.Con Res 13 and the "Sense of the Senate" stated the U.S.

government should “avoid purchases of goods and services from any international firm s that did business with Iran’s energy sector with revenue of at least \$1 million”. This included the oil and gas sectors as well (S. Con Res 13 2010).

As the crackdown continued, the House Appropriations Committee put forth a resolutions which would be part of foreign aid - H.R. 3081 that would deny Exim bank and credits to any firm that sold gasoline to Iran. In the 111th Congress, H.R. 1208 contained similar provisions akin to the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act (Katzman 2009b). These resolutions were all an attempts to send a clear signal to the Iranians that Congress was willing to be more assertive than the president in their condemnation of crackdown.

President Obama’s delayed reaction was in fact spearheaded further congressional outrage and reaction. The House and the Senate through their statements and passage of resolutions attempted to display consequential actions for Iran as a result of the crackdown (H.Res. 560 and S.Res. 193, respectively). These resolutions condemned the violence as well as the government’s suppression of electronic communication. H.Res. 560 was introduced by Howard Berman (D-CA). The Resolution passed 405-1 with 235 Democrats and 170 Republicans voting in favor while only 1 Republican voted against 2 Democrats voted present and 18 Democrats and 7 Republicans voted against. This vote was in accordance with the “suspension of the rules” which typically used to pass non-controversial bills in the House. This required a two-thirds majority, and failed to acquire it (H.Res 560 2009). S.Res. 193, the resolution was introduced by Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). The resolution, expressed support for all Iranian citizens who embrace the values of freedom, human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law (S.Res 193 2009). In addition to this, S.Res. 196, expressed the sense of the Senate and called for the Iranian regime to permit free expression, free speech, and a free press was passed by the Senate (S.Res 196, 2009 ).

In addition to Congress taking preemptive action in favor of the demonstrators, it also took the opportunity towards Iran’s nuclear program as well. This was a way for those members of Congress who were apprehensive over Obama’s strategy to in fact

thwart it. In April 2009, several bills were introduced in Congress that sought to impose sanctions on Iran. They were H.R. 2194, - Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) of 2010, the Senate roll call vote was unanimous 99-0 with 56 Democrats, 41 Republicans and 2 Independents voted in favor. While 1 Democrat was listed as not voting (HR 2194 2010). The House passed H.R. 2194 on December 15, 2009 by a vote of 412-12; 241 Democrats, 171 Republicans supported the bill while 9 Democrats and 2 Republicans voted against it". The legislation could effect companies such as Swiss-based companies like Glen-core International AG. S. 908, Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, sponsored by Sen Evan Bayh (D-IN) the bill died in Congress. (S. 908 2009). Both S. 908 and H.R. 2194, were another attempt by Congress to assert itself in policy making process as well as expand sanctions against Iran. These resolutions entailed; "barring transactions in foreign exchange by the firm", as well as "acquisitions or ownership of U.S. property" and and finally "financial transactions with U.S. banks on behalf of the sanctioned firm". The bill incorporated provisions from several other bills they were; S. 2799 - Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2009 that passed the Senate, H.R. 1327 - Iran Sanctions Enabling Act of 2009 passed the House (Oct 14, 2009) and senate version, S. 1065- Iran Sanctions Enabling Act of 2009. The Conference Report agreed by the Senate passed 99-0 with 1 Democrat not voting. The Conference Report agreed by the House passed 408-8. With more Democrats than Republicans voting in favor of the bill (S.908 2009; H.R. 2194 2009).

The focus of H.R. 2194 was narrow and far less likely to raise objections by the Europeans. S. 2799, raised concerns within the Administration as there was a fear that the legislation could undermine unity on international sanctions on Iran. In December 2009, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg sent a letter to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, John Kerry (D-MA) and raised questions about the Senate bill regarding "the lack of flexibility, inefficient monetary thresholds and penalty levels, and blacklisting that could cause unintended foreign policy consequences". The administration at the time avoided the use of the veto threat. A conference committee was held to work out the differences that culminated in a joint bill that was passed by both

chambers on June 24, 2010. The conference bill stipulated that the president was to “impose sanctions on any person or persons that invested \$20 million or more in Iran's petroleum industry”. Similarly, the legislation required the president to “sanction any person that provided Iran with goods, services, technology or information valuing \$1 million or more for Iran's production of refined petroleum products” (Sabatini NTI 2010). The bill was signed into law only after the UN sections were ratified. Obama was able to push back on signing the bill until the UN sanction, as there was a fear that the congressional sanctions would trump the UN sanctions.

Additional resolutions were put forward that were aimed at sanctions on foreign firms that supplied refined gasoline to Iran or equipment used for these purposes. Iran Threat Reduction Act of 2009 (H.R 1208), aimed at “strengthening existing legislation that sanctioned persons that aided and facilitated Iran’s nonproliferation activities and for other purposes”. The Act was proposed by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, however the bill died in Congress. The act dealt with amended provision in the in the Sanctions Act of 1996 as well as the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act. The Act also incorporated various other acts that dealt with sanctions. (H.R.1208 2009). The Iran Diplomatic Enhancement Act of 2009 (H.R. 1985), the bill was introduced by Mark Kirk in an effort “to amend the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 in an effort to enhance U.S. diplomatic efforts vis-a-vis Iran”. This was to be achieved by the “expansion of economic sanctions to include refined petroleum” (H.R.1985, 2009).

Congress also seemed to worry about the region and U.S. allies in the region. Therefore, the Senate put forth S.3810 - Gulf Security and Iran Sanctions Enforcement Act, the bill was sponsored by Sen. Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) and co-sponsored by Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD). The Act required pertained to the oil and gas sector . The aim of the bill was to reduce dependency on Iranian oil. It did not go against the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996. In addition to this, “lessee would be cancelled if they failed to make such certification” (S3810 2010)



Congress also introduced the Iran Diplomatic Accountability Act of 2009 (H.R. 334), the bill included “the appointment of a special envoy, one that would ease the tensions between the nations”. The bill was introduced by Rep Barbara Lee (D-CA) however the bill died in the House (H.R. 334 2009). The Iran Democratic Transition Act of 2010 (S. 3008) was introduced to “establish a program to support transition to a freely elected, open democracy in Iran”. It authorized the president “to support this by making provisions for eligible Iranian democratic opposition organizations with assistance for the communication and dissemination of accurate and independent information to the Iranian people through various media”. It urged the president to make use of “existing authorities and funds in an effort to provide humanitarian assistance”. The bill was sponsored by Sen John Cornyn (R-TX) and 20 other Republicans it was not a bipartisan bill. However it died in Congress (S.3008 2010). This bill was tantamount to regime change, one that has been generally supported by Republicans to a larger extent than by Democrats. As seen in chapter II, during the Bush presidency there was greater talk of regime change within the White House as well as Congress.

The senate put forth the Dodd-Shelby Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (S. 2799) ( November 19, 2009). As per the act, “sanctions were to be imposed on gasoline and refinery equipment sales”. The Act expanded the definition of “person” to include a “financial institution, insurer, underwriter, guarantor, and any other business organizations including a foreign subsidiary, parent, or affiliate, or a governmental entity acting as an export credit agency”. It prevented the U.S. government agencies from maintaining contracts with firms that supplied such items to Iran. In addition to this, it “re-imposed restrictions on imports” that were lifted previously. It included a “freeze on assets in the U.S.” and reimposition of “trade ban to include foreign entities”. The bill strengthened “export controls” that put an end to the illegal black market export of sensitive technology to Iran. The Senate passed S.2799 by a voice vote on January 28, 2010. The move was surprising in itself, and was passed with little debate. Timing was everything, the vote took place the day after, Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN), Sen Jon Kyl (R-AZ),

Sen Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Sen Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Sen Robert Casey (D-PA), Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) sent a letter to President Obama reminding Obama about the year-end deadline on the negotiations. They urged the president to pursue “parallel and complementary” measures to increase pressure against Iran. It also incorporated the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009 (H.R. 2194) through a Conference Committee (S. 2799 2009).

The Senate bill contained additional provisions which included export control-related provisions that were not present in the House bill. This had to go through the conference-committee to be settled. In addition, Senator McCain wanted to include sanctions on human rights abuses in the bill (Kelley 2010). The reconciled bill was signed into law by the president in July 2010 after the fourth round of UN sanctions were imposed. Timing was once again crucial, Obama was able to push back the Republicans as well as some Democrats for a limited period of time. Therefore in an effort to silence his domestic opposition as well as shore up support at the international level, the president signed the bill into law after the imposition of UN sanctions (Baker 2010).

In addition to the unilateral sanctions, proposed by Congress UNSC were able to impose sanctions on Iran through UN Resolution 1929. This was the fourth round of sanctions that widened the scope of sanctions on Iran. The resolution included sanctions on the Revolutionary Guard, subjected Iranian vessels to inspections on the high seas, a ban on arm sales, and restriction on investments. Congress was also in the process of finalizing legislation. It contained a number of tough new economic penalties aimed at persuading Iran to change its behavior. Among the measures, it targeted firms that sold refined petroleum to Iran or that dealt with the Revolutionary Guard. But some in Congress pushed for stricter sanctions there were those that were weary of sanctions and their adverse effects on diplomacy Kerry argued for continued engagement along with pressure (Richter 2012).

Even though the Democrats controlled Congress this did not equal to a lack of congressional control on policy making. The Democrats pushed Obama into negotiating

sanctions, an attempt by Congress to reassert itself in the foreign policy process. As pressure from the House mounted, the president felt compelled to act, this was not well received, as he preferred the diplomatic route. With the piling of U.S. unilateral sanctions, Obama and the members of his administration were concerned about the reaction from international partners specifically the members from the UNSC. In the sanctions towards Iran, it was Congress that (at first) took the lead, while Obama took a back seat (Cornwell 2010a).

In an attempt to lead the charge on sanctions, by the end of 2010 Congress began crafting legislation that would essentially exclude Iran from financial transactions this was possible with the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). The aim was to damage the Iranian economy by placing restrictions on the banks and other institutions.

Congress toiled with the idea of force while others hoped additional sanctions would alter the behavior of Iran. They also wanted to persuade Israel to forgo a military strike. There were many members in Congress who did not agree with Obama's strategy towards China and Russia. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), ranking minority member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, stated that "the absence of any sanctions on Russian and Chinese companies is very conspicuous." The administration according to Ros-Lehtinen stated that the U.S. should not cover for the Russian and Chinese who have strong relations with Iran (Richter 2010).

The introduction of legislation was not the only way in which members of both Houses and parties expressed their concern over the engagement with Iran. Congress wrote letters not only to the president but eventually they wrote a letter to the Ayatollah expressing their concern. All members of Congress did not support sanctions and therefore, in 2010, 366 members of the House sent a letter warning the president that the sanction regime led by the U.S. could have a negative impact on the Iranian economy. They further stated that these sanctions were inadequate and pressed for further action. The efforts made by Congress were bi-partisan in nature (Fisher 2013). This was a letter

specifically from the Democrats in Congress who worried about the impact that sanctions would have on engagement.

In addition to this, there were additional letters sent to the president orchestrated by Democrats who did not approve of Obama's policy together with the Republican Party, this bipartisanship was as a result of the the issue at hand vis-a-vis Iran. A reason for not all Democrats supporting the president was as a result of their constituent makeup as well as support and funds granted to them by AIPAC. Rep Jesse Jackson (D-IL) and Rep Mike Pence (R-IN) through a letter urged the president towards imposing stricter sanctions. Jackson and Pence, along with Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD.), Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA.), Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL.) and Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN.) reiterated this at a press conference. A similar letter was circulated in the Senate. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) were able to get 80 members of the Senate to agree. In December, the House through a 412-12 passed a measure that enabled Obama to ban foreign firms from doing business in the U.S. if they supplied Iran with refined petroleum. The Senate passed a different version of this bill that targeted Iran's energy sector by voice vote (Johnson 2010).

### **2011-2012 Congress: Does Divided Government Make a Difference**

The 2010 midterm election, dealt a heavy blow to the Administration. It was not only the loss of the House but rather the rise of the Tea Party as a result of voter dissatisfaction that weighed heavily on the president. The year of 2011 began with divided government. The Republicans were victorious in the House while the Democrats barely clung to the Senate. The loss was greater than the 1994 Republican Revolution. The Democrats lost 63 seats thus tipping the balance of power in Congress as well as the president's policies. Therefore, there was an expected deadlock when it to the making of policies. The year also brought a break down in the diplomatic process between the P5 and Iran.

The 2010 midterm elections were part of the surge and decline effect that is often witnessed. That is there is most often than not a surge in the president's approval ratings which is transferred to his co-partisans in Congress which leads to increased seats. The decline at the midterm is very often attributed to low voter turnout dissatisfied voters who are unhappy about the presidents performance as well as of his co-partisans in Congress. The rise of the Tea Party and their victory of many seats thus overthrowing not only Democrats but traditional Republicans changed the politics of Washington, from bargaining and compromise to un-compromising. The relations between the president and the Republicans also changed from a position of power and partisan legislative agenda to a more bipartisan one.

In April, Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA) put forward a bill, Stop Iran's Nuclear Program Act 2011. The act amended the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 to include the imposition of sanctions on a persons that knowingly entered into an agreement with Iran. This was especially in the matter of petroleum resources (either purchase or payment). In addition to this, it also included ancillary services, and the development of petroleum resources along with the National Iranian Oil Company. The co-sponsors for the bill included both Democrats as well as Republicans (H.R. 1655, 2011) In addition, the Republican House put forward two bills that extended sanctions on Iran in an effort to curb their nuclear program. This was especially true given the regional speculation over whether Israel would attack Iran. The first bill was the Iran, North Korea and Syria Non-Proliferation Reform and Modernization Act. This was geared towards the imposition of penalties against any individual or companies that aided in the transfer of equipment that could be used in Iran's nuclear program. In addition to this, the Iran Threat Reduction Act was put forth by Congress. The Act aimed at reducing presidential authority. In addition to this, it expanded existing sanctions on entities that were in business with the IRGC which in turn controlled 40% of the Iranian economy (Lobe 2011).

Therefore, with government divided, the nature of the sanctions also changed, with the attempts to limit the president's authority. Most of the bills hence forth were

proposed by the Republican House but died in the Senate. This was especially true with the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Reform and Modernization Act of 2011, passed by the House but died in the Senate. In the House it passed 418-2 with 284 Republicans and 184 Democrats voting in favor, 2 Democrats voting against and 7 Republicans and 6 Democrats not voting. The bill if implemented would have and enforced sanctions against Iran, North Korea, and Syria as a result of their proliferation activities. It directed the president to report to Congress to identify foreign persons who “on or after January 1, 1999, transferred or acquired from Iran, who on or after January 1, 2005, transferred to or acquired from Syria, or who on or after January 1, 2006, transferred to or acquired from North Korea” (H.R.2105, 2011a,b). In addition to this, the Iran Threat Reduction Act was introduced in May 2011 and passed in 2012. In the Senate, human rights in Syria was added as part of the bill. The House passed it 410-11, with 233 Republicans 177 Democrats voting in favor, 2 Republicans, 9 Democrats voting against and 6 Democrats and Republicans not voting. The bill vacillated between the House and the Senate as both had to agree on changes. It was passed by the Senate by a voice vote and therefore it lacked a record. In August 2012, the President signed the bill into law (H.R.1905, 2012).

The Senate, was proactive, in October Sen. Robert Menendez put forward Iran, North Korea and Syria Sanctions Consolidation Act of 2011 wherein the U.S. policy aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability. It like many of the bills proposed earlier would amend the Iran Sanctions Act 1996, it directed the president to impose sanctions against persons that knowingly participated in Iran’s development of petroleum. The bill was co-sponsored by both Democrats and Republicans (S.1048 2011). The Senate approved of the tougher sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran. It was geared towards foreign financial institutions. The Senate passed the bill in spite of warnings from the White House as it would target U.S. allies. As U.S. banks were already prevented from doing business with Iran, the new bill included foreign banks as well. The Senate voted 100-0 on an amendment that would grant the president the ability to sanction foreign banks found to have carried out a transactions with the Central Bank.

The amendment was sponsored by, Sen. Robert Menendez, a (D-NJ), and Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL). It was part of the Defense Authorization Act. The House had also approved of similar amendments therefore there was a greater chance of some version reaching the president. The Senate amendment provided a six-month grace period prior to the implementation of sanctions. This was aimed at giving the world oil markets time to adjust. It included a waiver to be used at the president's discretion. Menendez, had agreed to make changes to the amendment to suit the Obama administration however the administration rejected the legislation. The Obama administration's chief concerns appeared to be that the amendment could raise oil prices and undermine the support from allies regarding sanctions (Mohammed and Cornwell 2011). The two sides of Pennsylvania Avenue were at odds when it came to sanctions. The members of the administration worried that the sanctions could derail the negotiations which had stalled. The bill passed with limited opposition with a 93-7 (Merica 2011).

Once the bill passed the Senate, changes were made by the House and a House-Senate Conference Committee consented to the language. The Conference Report modified the bill but preserved the scope of the sanctions. The House adopted the sanctions as a "stand-alone measure", while the Senate adopted it through the defense authorization bill, which entailed sanctions on the central bank. The sanctions were signed into law by President Obama on the December 31st. It addressed firms doing business with the Central Bank of Iran. The strategy behind such a move was to end Tehran's oil sales (Crail 2012). President Obama had displayed his reluctance, but the bill had bipartisan support in Congress and left Obama with little choice. This created a tussle between Congress and Executive Branch. The president and Congress sparred over 'trying terror suspects'. President Obama opposed the provision as it could hamper the negotiation process. The addressed suspects accused of planning attacks against the US or its allies (BBC 31st Dec 2011). In addition to congressional action, Europe sought to push forward a Europe-wide boycott of Iranian crude imports. EU foreign ministers failed in this endeavor led by Britain and France, but agreed to examine expanding sanctions (Mohammed and Cornwell 2011).

Congress went a step further with sanctions in the Defense Authorization Act FY2012. This was specifically contained in sec 1245. The legislation, included sanctions against Iran's Central Bank and strict curbs on official diplomatic contacts between Washington and Tehran. It also addressed money laundering , freezing of assets to name a few. It included the multilateral diplomatic initiative as well (Department of Treasury, Defense Authorization Act FY2012).

In addition to congressional sanctions as well as E.U. sanctions, the president through EO imposed sanctions as well. The administration had imposed several rounds of sanctions on Iran however these sanctions did not go far enough as the administration did not want to cut off negotiations with Iran completely. The year 2012 began with appeals from members in Congress like Rep.Ted Deutch (D-FL) who through the Speaker urged Congress to act on additional sanctions that would hamper the Ayatollahs as well as the IRGC (Deutch, 2012 ).

In an attempt to further assert itself with respect to Iran, Congress began crafting legislation in the beginning of 2012. According to Harry Reid, the only way to get sanctions in place was to take up a bipartisan bill that passed unanimously out of the Senate Banking Committee. Though the Democrats offered additional amendments, they agreed to streamline the process and refrain from offering their amendments (Reid 2012).

In an effort to adhere to its promises regarding sanctions, Congress put the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) on the table. The president was opposed to the levying additional sanctions but for Congress as well as international allies like Britain and France pushed for SWIFT as the danger of a nuclear Iran grew and negotiations with the P5 were at a stalemate. The bill attempted to cut Iran out of the “global clearinghouse for international financial transactions known as the SWIFT”. Its aim was far-reaching as well as to inflict severe damage on Iran's economy. It restricted the ability of banks and other institutions to move funds in or out of the country. In these endeavors it was the E.U. and Congress that asserted sanctions while the administration was skeptical. Thus, it gave the illusion that Obama was “leading from



behind” by empowering other countries to carry out America's bidding. The fears of the Israel weighed in on lawmakers. During the debate on sanction, Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner met with key lawmakers in an effort to change their course of action. The Senate voted 100 to 0, Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) argued that the administration should set a specific goals. But the administration rejected that notion, and preferred latitude in the decision of punishing entities that did business with Iran (as these included U.S. allies) (Richter 2012).In meetings over SWIFT, U.S. lawmakers and their staff were hoping the EU’s law would include a ban on the Iranian central bank. The new Senate package sought to target foreign banks that dealt with transactions pertaining to Iranian oil and entities that dealt with it (Rampton Feb 2nd 2012; Younglai 2012).

In 2012, Congress prior to adjourning for its August recess, the House and Senate passed an amended version of H.R. 1905, the far-reaching and harsh Iran sanctions bill introduced by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL). The House originally passed the bill in December 2011 (with support of 233 Republicans and 177 Democrats supporting it) and the Senate passed the bill in May 2012 after replacing the House text with that of the slightly pared-down version. This was the Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Human Rights Act of 2012 (S. 2101). It was introduced in February by Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD). The Act entailed, expansion of multilateral sanctions. It prevented Iran from acquiring or developing nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and advanced conventional weapons as well as implemented all sanctions that forced Iran to abandon nuclear weapons and terrorist activities. The resolution also dealt with sanctions pertaining to the energy sector, WMD’s and the IRGC (H.R. 2101 2011).

Instead of going to conference to reconcile the two versions, where it would have faced attempts by war hawks to further toughen it, Ros-Lehtinen and Johnson privately negotiated a slightly stronger and amended version that came to be known as the ‘Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012’. The new version passed the House under “suspension of the rules” (meaning limited debate and no amendments) by a

roll call vote of 421-6. Reps. Justin Amash (R-MI), John Duncan (R-TN), Tim Johnson (R-IL), Walter Jones (R-NC), Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and Ron Paul (R-TX) voted nay. The Senate passed it the same day by voice vote. While harsh, it included the provision inserted in the Senate bill by Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) that was not “a declaration of war” or “use of force against Iran or Syria.” It included provisions inserted in the Senate bill by Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ) that military options remained on the table (Public Law 112–158 2012)

The House in May passed the AIPAC-promoted H.Res. 568, that expressed the sense of the House of Representatives in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability. It stated that “containing” a nuclear Iran was not an option, and “urged” the president to reaffirm the “unacceptability” of a nuclear-weapons capability in Iran. In the Senate, an identical version of the resolution, S.Res. 380 was introduced in February by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), met with resistance, as it could have been seen as an authorization for “use of force”. So Graham in May introduced S.J.Res. 41, a slimmed-down version of S.Res. 380, which concluded with, “nothing in this resolution shall be construed as an authorization for the use of force or a declaration of war.” The resolution passed 90-1 with 9 not voting (HR 568 2012; S Res 380 2012; SJ Res 41 2012 ).

In 2012, it was not only that Congress that was weary of the endless negotiations which had no end in sight, it was an election year as well. Therefore, the Iran issue became an important battleground issue one the Republicans wanted to capitalize on. The Democrats were in fervent support of President Obama and the Republicans supported “other avenues” to deal with Iran. During the election campaign, President Obama reiterated his commitment to Iran not obtaining a nuclear weapons on his watch. Congress, for their efforts to reassert themselves, were not going to take any chances. However, Iran’s nuclear program was not the only issue that the president and Congress had to contend with. According to the PEW survey, 58% said they did not want Iran to develop nuclear weapons, 30% wanted to avoid military conflict. More Democrats than Republicans preferred to avoid military conflict with Iran. If Israel were attacked more

Republicans would support Israel and more Democrats would oppose Israel's action (PEW Feb 15 2012). Therefore the party lines and the battle lines were drawn.

But sanctions on Iran and third parties seemed the policy of the U.S. The president as well as Congress attempted to tighten the economic noose round Iran. The imposition of additional sanctions on two foreign banks in China and Iraq , as well as the sanctions were expanded on petrochemicals to include methanol and xylene. The industry was already under strict U.N. and E.U. sanctions. The introduction of the new sanctions by the president was an attempt at oneupmanship against Congress. Obama's introduction of sanctions was a strategic message prior to the vote by Congress on sanctions. The bill that was agreed on by the House and the Senate and aimed at the expansion of penalties on companies doing business with Iran's national oil company and tanker fleet. The bill attempted to make it difficult for Iran to extract payments (Warrick 2012).

### **Congressional Skepticism: The Way Toward the Interim Nuclear Agreement**

The year 2013 commenced with the reelection of President Obama . The second term provided Obama allows greater leeway to fulfill his agenda. For Obama this included the opening up of Cuba and the nuclear agreement with Iran. Obama's 2012 victory was seen as a way to capitalize and raised new hopes for negotiating process. In the second term, President's tend to invest greater political capital.

In May 2013 Senate resolution sponsored by Robert Menendez (D-NJ) chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Lindsey Graham (R-SC). It stated that if Israel "is compelled to take military action in self-defense, the United States government should stand with Israel and provide diplomatic, military and economic support to the government of Israel in its defense of its territory, people and existence." Obama reiterated that the U.S. would stand with Israel if there was an attack by Iran. The non-binding resolution, promoted by AIPAC, did not authorize any specific action, it increased political pressure on Obama by putting Congress on record as backing a military operation initiated by Israel at a time of Israel's choosing. It In addition to this, it

would also hamper negotiations by playing into Iranian fears of the regime change. The second measure, a bipartisan bill, S.Res.65 - “A resolution strongly supporting the full implementation of United States and international sanctions on Iran and urging the President to continue to strengthen enforcement of sanctions legislation”. This would impose tougher sanctions just as the two sides were attempting to create trust after decades of hostility. The bill would further restrict business dealings with Iran, widen the list of blacklisted Iranian companies and individuals, and potentially block Iran’s access to foreign bank assets held in euros. It could unravel the international coalition against Iran by penalizing countries — like Turkey, India, South Korea and China — that have not done enough to enforce sanctions (S.Res 65 2013).

In spite of the many members in Congress geared towards a diplomatic route, there were others that were ‘trigger happy’ and urged the imposition of new sanctions on Iran. The Republican leadership were especially pushing for a more forceful policy towards Iran as the nuclear program was still in effect. The House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Ed Royce and Mitch McConnell the Senate Minority Leader were pushing for stronger action. The members of the administration went all out in an effort to warn Congress against the imposition of sanctions that could derail the international talks. This was especially up to John Kerry and senior members of the Administration (AP 2013).

The year 2013 brought with it a great deal of hope among members of the Administration. The election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran created a wave of hope not only for Iranians but for the negotiation process as well. As part of his campaign, Rouhani promised to alleviate Iran from under the ‘crippling sanctions’ imposed on the country. The U.N., E.U as well as unilateral sanctions together with the previous regime’s unwillingness to negotiate with the West was one of the reasons for Rouhani’s victory. The Obama administration took advantage of this and made a serious effort to negotiate with the new administration. Congressional reaction to the election results were mixed. The Subcommittee Chair Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and her

colleagues were apprehensive but were sure that the administration would use the election of the moderate president as justification to jumpstart diplomacy with Iran (Markaz 2013).

On becoming president, Rouhani's tone was more of 'conciliatory optimism'. With the electoral victory (June 2013), he displayed a willingness to negotiate with the West. The Obama administration was very optimistic about the change in leadership. Congress was uncertain and pessimistic (Katzman 2014b )

As part of his election campaign, Rouhani had promised to tone down the tension with the West especially America. He had also promised to alleviate Iran from under the the economic pressure of sanctions. With respect to Iran's nuclear program, Rouhani said his government would restore "mutual confidence" by promoting step-by-step measures in order to reassure the international community about Iranian ambitions. He described western sanctions targeting Iran's economy and its banking system as "cruel" and stated the goal was to alleviate Iran from under the guise of the sanction regime. He also signaled 'engagement' with the West (Dehghan 2013).

During the renewed negotiations, There was bipartisan disappointment with process of negotiations as well as the deal. Sen Charles Schumer (D-NY), vehemently disagreed with the White House and their tactics to get the deal on the table. There were other Democrats that joined him, this included Robert Melendez (D-NJ) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) stated that the deal would be "detrimental" (Gharib 2013).

In July 2013, Congress sent a letter to the president. About 131 House members signed a letter to the administration encouraging it to pursue diplomacy with Iran, which elected a reformist new president, Hassan Rouhani (Fisher 19th July 2013 - Washington Post). The letter known as the *Dent-Price* letter named after its principal authors, Reps. Charlie Dent (R-PA) and David Price (D-NC), it stated that,

*"We believe it would be a mistake not to test whether Dr. Rouhani's election represents a real opportunity for progress toward a verifiable,*

*enforceable agreement. In order to test this proposition, it will be prudent for the U.S. to utilize all diplomatic tools to reinvigorate ongoing nuclear talks” (Price 2013).*

In the Senate, the Democrats and Republicans attempted to push the president towards additional sanctions. This was “to bring a renewed sense of urgency to the process”. Foreign Relations Committee Chair, Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) were joined by a group of 76 Senators sent a letter on August 2 to Obama. The letter prescribed tightening sanctions and military threats that were feared could be counterproductive impact by Iran. The letter went along with the House passage of the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act 2013 (AMC Aug 8th 2013).

Throughout the administration whether government was unified or divided, the administration and Congress looked as though it was playing a game of ‘good cop bad cop’ when it came to Iran. The Democrats were displeased with the negotiation process but Chuck Schumer and Bob Menendez went further and introduced a bill in an effort to introduce new sanctions on Iran. The new sanctions became part of the Nuclear Weapons Free Iran Act of 2013, it did not differ greatly from those in H.Res 850. - The Nuclear Iran Prevention Act, cleared the House of Representatives by a vote of 420–20 in July 2013. However, the bill failed to pass the Senate, as a result of a polarized Senate that was controlled by the Democrats who attempted to protect Obama’s strategy. The bill entailed an expansion of sanctions on specific areas like mining, construction and engineering sectors. The Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 expressed the sense of Congress on Iran’s nuclear program including enrichment and reprocessing capabilities (S.1881 2013). The act was introduced by Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL), it stipulated that sanctions would kick in should Iran violate the temporary deal or should negotiators fail to reach a comprehensive final agreement. but the Senate was a different story, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid indicated he was opposed bringing the bill to the floor in January, saying he agreed with

the Obama administration's call to give the delicate negotiations a chance to work (AFP, 2013).

There were regional dimensions, this included Israel. This act meant that if Israel were to take military action in self-defense against Iran's nuclear weapons program the U.S. would provide Israel with diplomatic, military, and economic support. In addition to this, the U.S. would continue to impose sanctions on Iran and its terrorist proxies. Further penalties were imposed against “foreign financial institutions that conducted transactions with Iran’s blacklisted entities including the Iran’s Central Bank and other Iranian Iranian banks. Sanctions on senior officials in Iran were expanded (S1881 2013).

In spite of Congress putting forth resolutions, negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran continued. By November 2013, the P5+1 and Iran had reached a tentative interim agreement. Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) and ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed skepticism. This was especially pertaining to sanctions and sanction waivers (Contorno Dec 2013). The timing of the Nuclear Weapons Free Act also served as a slap in the face of the new management in Tehran, further reducing the success rate of the negotiations (Pillar 2013).

The issue of sanction was not a partisan phenomena as Democrats attempted to shield themselves politically as well. The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez, stated that he would work with colleagues to have sanctions against Iran ready “should the talks falter or Iran fail to implement or breach the interim agreement.” Sen. Chuck Schumer, said he was “disappointed”. Sen. Marco Rubio stated “There is now an even more urgent need for Congress to increase sanctions until Iran completely abandons its enrichment and reprocessing capabilities.” Therefore there was bipartisan disappointment for the deal in addition to this there was a bipartisan push for stricter sanctions. Obama was able to wield support to hold off sanctions. Rep. Eliot Engel, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. “I don’t trust them, I don’t think we should trust them... Sanctions should always be hanging there because that’s what brought Iran to the table in the first place”.

Republican Rep. Ed Royce, the chair the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Iranians “are capable of cheating.” Republican House Speaker John Boehner was skeptical about the six-month pause in negotiations (Japan Times 2013).

In December, a bipartisan bill that called for new sanctions was introduced, the new sanction bill entailed legislation that broadened the scope of the sanctions. This included, expanding the restrictions on Iran’s energy sector to include all aspects of petroleum trade, shipping and mining sectors. In addition to this, the bill called for Obama to waive new sanctions during the current talks by certifying periodically (every 30 days) that Iran was in compliance with the Geneva deal and negotiations towards a final agreement were in progress. The Republicans specifically, Iran hawk, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) inserted other conditions such sponsoring or carrying out acts of terrorism against U.S. targets. With the support of AIPAC, the ‘Graham resolution’ a non-binding bill that was passed by the Senate. However, the supporters of the deal and critics of bill stated that the imposition of sanctions created a direct confrontation with the White House, which was negotiating the final deal with Tehran that would allow for continued Iranian enrichment capabilities (Gharib 2013). The White House stated that it would veto the bill if it passed Congress. The president and his advisors worried that the bill could derail negotiations of a final deal. The Administration also felt that such a move was unnecessary. Twenty-six U.S. senators introduced new Iran sanctions legislation, despite an intense White House lobbying campaign. In addition to this, the Republicans, asserted their authority on S.Res 269, a resolution that expressed the ‘sense of the senate’. The Resolution was led by Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL). The resolution, expressed that it was United States policy regarding possession of enrichment and reprocessing capabilities by the Islamic Republic of Iran (S.Res 269 2013).

At the beginning of of 2014, the clock on the interim nuclear deal with Iran began. Thus, debate in Congress over their role increased. The P5 gave Iran a six-month time frame to negotiate a comprehensive deal. Obama also vowed to veto any congressional legislation that placed new sanctions on Iran. There was a bone of



contention for Congress especially when it came to ‘not imposing additional sanctions’. This had direct implications for Congress. The warning over sanctions came from the Foreign Minister Javed Zarif (Katzman 2014b) .

With the negotiations still ongoing, throughout 2014, there was a great deal of pushback from Congress. The interim agreement did not require an easing of any U.S. sanctions that were imposed in the 1980s and 1990s based on Iran’s support for acts of international terrorism (Katzman and Kerr 2013)

In addition to the interim agreement and the negotiations towards a comprehensive agreement, 2014 signaled the midterm elections. By the end of 2013, the Republicans were far more than Democrats optimistic about the outcome of the 2014 midterm elections. Throughout 2014, the Democrats and Republicans were gearing up for the 2014 midterms. The Democrats lost both Houses. But this did not stop the activity in Congress over Iran. According to a PEW survey (2014b), the Republicans were leading in several areas, this included ‘terrorist threat, budget deficit, economy and immigration while Democrats led the debate on healthcare. Additionally, the Democrats had the advantage on a number of qualities that included ‘honesty’, ‘empathy’, ‘willingness to compromise’. According to these sources ‘voters frustration is even higher than it was in 2006 or 2010; 68% state that do not want to see most members of Congress reelected, 35%) say they do not want their own representative reelected.

The midterm elections, resulted in a Republican victory in both Houses. This meant that Obama was faced with a strengthened Republican majority in Congress in the last two years of his presidency. It also meant that most of what he achieved could be discredited like the Affordable Care Act and the Republicans would create a deadlock on anything Obama wanted to achieve in the last two years.

### **A Defiant Congress: The Deal, Partisanship and the 114th Congress**

The 114th Congress began on a good note for the Republicans. They controlled both Houses of Congress, therefore there was strength in numbers in their efforts to

thwart Obama's agenda. The second midterm for a president is often called the the 'sixth year curse. Like his predecessor, Obama lost both Houses in the election. The Republicans first attempt at asserting themselves was to overturn, the Affordable Healthcare Act (Obamacare). It was one of the key reasons for their victory in 2010. There were also many Republicans who disagreed with his foreign policy this was especially in the case of Iran and Syria .

The relationship between the executive and legislature was fraught by partisanship. Legislative gridlock was to be expected given the historical narrative; which stated that in times of divided government and as a result of partisan polarization, gridlock was imminent, this also meant that the Democrats in the Senate were more likely to use the filibuster. This was especially true in the case of repealing Obamacare as well as the debate over the Keystone pipeline. Members of Congress were more willing to work on domestic policy rather than foreign policy. As a result there was a deadlock in matters pertaining to foreign policy. The Congress and president failed to reach a consensus on three-quarters of the salient issues. This included , the Iran negotiations, Russian aggression in Ukraine and Crimea, as well as Syria. Party control, shrinking middle. The midterms of 2010 and 2014 generated a bicameral conflict (Tama 2018). There were sizable partisan gaps. Foreign policy, the deficit budget and immigration were the dominant issues for the Republicans, hovering around 70% on the other hand only half of Democratic voters said that these issues were 'very important' to their vote decisions (PEW 2014a). In the aftermath of the election, 48% were happy with the Republican victory. However, Obama's ratings relatively were unchanged, those who approved of the job he was doing hovered round 43% while those who disapproved 52%. In comparison to his predecessor, Obama's approval ratings were much higher (PEW 2014c).

With polarization and gridlock at high levels, the public were spilt on who should to the lead in dealing with the problems. According to PEW, the majority stated that Democrats were more open, tolerant and cared about the middle class. At the time the

public were divided on who should take the lead in solving the nation's problems; 40% say Obama while 38% say GOP leaders. However the tables turned on matters pertaining to foreign policy, terrorism and taxes. This has been a result of 'issue ownership' . fully 81% of Republicans say the GOP is best equipped to handle foreign policy, while a smaller majority of Democrats (66%) say their party could do the better job (PEW Feb 26 2015a).

The polarization and political division was at a record levels with 81% saying that the country was more divided. More than three-quarters (78%) said either the country will be as about divided as is today (41%), or more politically divided (36%).few expect Obama and GOP leaders to make progress on that problem. About three-quarters (76%) of those who cited a top national problem – including large majorities of Republicans (78%), Democrats (71%) and independents (80%), say they do not think Obama and Republican leaders will make progress on the problem they mentioned (PEW 2014d).

Congress has become more homogeneous, the president entrusts his agenda with congressional leaders this especially true in the case of unified government. President Bush and Obama entrusted their bidding to the leadership in the House and Senate thus strengthening the leadership. However during divided government the president might not cede power over his agenda to the leadership in Congress (Andres and Griffin 2018). With the Republicans in control of both houses in Congress, compromise was an important partnering the last leg of his presidency as both Houses of Congress were under Republican central.

When it came to sanctioning Iran, like his predecessors Clinton and Bush, Obama wanted to maintain control over the sanctioning process. However the president signed all most all the bills that were passed by both Houses. The bills gave presidential flexibility. However , congressional deference was waning (Tama 2018 ).

President Obama's relations with the Republicans from 2015 to the end of his presidency was an offensive-defensive battle. This was especially when the leadership

went over the president's head and invited Netanyahu to speak before a joint session as well as the letter to the Ayatollah. There by attempting to undercut the power the president wields. Thus, though the Obama , the administration and the democrats were outraged and condemned the act, Obama kept his distance. However, Obama remained close to the Democrats in an effort not to freeze Congress out completely. The Democrats were not to pleased about about the speech and about 60 Democrats boycotted the speech and many casted their absence as a protest against Speaker John Boehner. The Republicans praised the Speaker's move, this was done more to rally the conservative base as there were signs of fragmentation (Singer 2015). This move raised the partisan war that had already reached record levels.

Netanyahu speech to a joint session in Congress was an attempt by the Republicans to allow Bibi to take his case to the American people against the deal. The 'Netanyahu speech' was the least of President Obama's troubles, On March 9th 2015, 47 Senators sent a letter to the Iranian parliament. The letter entitled "an open letter to the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran,". It was structured as a civics lesson, that argued that despite the president and the Executive Branch's approval of any deal with Iran, Congress had authority to assert itself. A key portion of the 286-word letter undersigned senators stated ;

*"we will consider any agreement regarding your nuclear-weapons program that is not approved by the Congress as nothing more than an executive agreement between President Obama and Ayatollah Khamenei. The next president could revoke such an executive agreement with the stroke of a pen and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time."* (Cotton March 9 2015).

This was a clear warning not only to Iran, the P5 as well as President Obama. On the negotiating front, the Obama administration's efforts to negotiate a nuclear deal with Iran were already contentious, the letter further complicated the situation. The letter was

signed by a few Democrats but most Republicans. It was orchestrated by Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AK) who had been an opponent of Obama's engagement with Iran and called for stricter sanctions. He was against the deal as he did not address the ballistic missile program as well as Iran's terror financing. The letter was written prior to the JCPOA and finalizing the deal. The letter came after Netanyahu's speech to Congress was a clear indication, that many Republicans in Congress had no intension of working with Obama on the deal, rather they had every intension to thwart the agreement. This was a way that Congress attempted to reassert itself in policy making process. However, there were a number of Republicans that refused to sign the letter - included Bob Corker (R-TN), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Susan Collins (R-ME), Dan Coates (R-IN), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) (Graham 2015).

The letter was engineered by Sen Tom Cotton (R-AK) and 46 Republicans. Therefore in doing so, the Republican controlled Congress made it clear that the power to keep the deal lay with Congress and the next President but not Obama. On the one hand the letter seemed as though Congress was assessing itself in matters pertaining to presidential authority. Vice President Joe Biden stated that the letter "is beneath the dignity of an institution I revere." Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said the letter "has no legal value and is mostly a propaganda ploy." The State Department stated that "Congress doesn't have the power to alter the terms of international arrangements negotiated by the executive," (Jacobson 2015).

The Republicans grandstanding maneuver reaped temporary results. However the calculated move created further doubts within the Iranian political leadership regarding U.S. motives in the region. What the letter did was further polarized an already polarized Congress (Maloney 2015) .

There were some who saw the letter as a violation of the Logan Act. The Act states that,

*"Any citizen of the United States, wherever he may be, who, without authority of the United States, directly or indirectly*

*commences or carries on any correspondence or intercourse with any foreign government or any officer or agent thereof, with intent to influence the measures or conduct of any foreign government or of any officer or agent thereof, in relation to any disputes or controversies with the United States, or to defeat the measures of the United States, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.”* (Seitzinger 2015)

Law professor, Peter Spiro stated that the letter violated the ‘Logan Act’. According to many, the move by the GOP was a tactic an effort to influence the president as well as assert congressional power over presidential decisions. In 1975, Sen. John Sparkman (D-AL) and Sen George McGovern (D-SD) traveled to Cuba to negotiate directly with Fidel Castro about easing relations. In 1927, the Senate’s anti-imperialist “peace progressives,” led by Sen. William Borah (R-ID), wrote directly to the Mexican president in an effort to renegotiate oil leases granted to U.S. oil companies under an agreement reached by President Coolidge. Here was where Edwin Corwin’s (1978) an invitation to struggle came into play (Moran 2015).

The Republicans, continued to introduce legislation that would impede the president’s hold over the deal. These measures in fact would empower Congress. An additional bill and hearing on the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015 (S. 269) was held and introduced by Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL). However, the bill died in Congress. The bill expressed the sense of Congress to stall Iran’s development of nuclear program as well as enrichment and reprocessing capabilities under the NPT. The sense of the senate gave the president a five day period (after the comprehensive agreement was signed) to send Congress; the text of the agreement, verification report, and `the economic sanctions relief assessment report. It prohibited the president from exercising any waiver of sanctions on Iran. (S.792 2015).

In May 2015, the Senate asserted once again its role in the policy making process. The Senate overwhelmingly approved legislation that allowed Congress to review a potential nuclear agreement struck between the P5+1 and Iran. The Iran Review Act was passed a 98-1 vote. This was a bipartisan move by lawmakers to assert their role in a key foreign-policy decision. The only senator to oppose the legislation was Tom Cotton (R-AK), the freshman Republican from Arkansas, a hawk on Iran. He campaigned against the Obama administration's negotiations with Iran and was blocked from offering amendments to the bill. In doing so, the Congress would still find it difficult to reject an agreement. Under a compromise worked out by Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), lawmakers had 30 days to approve, disapprove, or take no action on a final nuclear agreement. Cotton tried to use a procedural gambit to force a vote on his amendment that would have compelled Tehran to shut down all its nuclear facilities (Berman 2015a). In May the House passed a similar bill that became law. The Iran Review Act was a sign that there was an overwhelming majority in Congress that agreed in some part with the negotiation process as well as reaching an agreement. On the other hand it also meant that the Republicans would make sure that aspects of their agenda would be given due recognition.

Throughout the negotiation of a comprehensive deal Congress notably introduced legislation that could have created an impediment to the negotiations but they also held several hearings regarding various aspects pertaining to Iran.

In July with the deal in place, Congress held hearings and the administration was on trial to defend its motivations as well as the deal itself. During the the hearings members of Congress raised questions regarding Iran's destabilizing activities in Syria, as well as the regional response to the deal. Michael Doran addressed the regional issue. The Administration was willing to provide tools and initiatives to aid the GCC to defend itself. Doran also addressed the sunset clause and the removal of sanctions on Iran as well as Obama's refusal end Iran's influence in Yemen, Iraq and Syria. The debate also focussed on the future of the nuclear program in the aftermath when the deal expires.

Another aspect that was discussed, was possible military dimensions and the ballistic missile program. There was a feeling that the president could do more in negotiations with Iran pertaining to ballistic missiles and the president should reopen negotiations on certain issues. Michael Makovsky, in his testimony he outlined the consequences of the deal vis-a-vis the Sunni allies who could seek to develop nuclear programs or acquire nuclear weapons to ensure security. Second, the radicals in the region, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, IS, and the Muslim Brotherhood, could be emboldened by this deal. Third, realignment in the region, that is other countries in the region could seek closer relations with Russia and China. Fourth, it was unclear whether containment even was an option and deterrence applied to the Iranian regime. Fifth Israel could well feel compelled to strike Iran. The deal could insight greater tension and the risk of conventional war and even nuclear conflict that can draw in the US was one of the major debated during the hearing. Kenneth Pollack on the other hand looked at the wider picture of U.S. strategy in the regional context. The main aspect was U.S. groundwork in the aftermath of the deal. From a regional perspective, the administration would have to do a great deal in an effort to make up for the deal (CHRG July 9th 2015).

### **Active Democrats vs Acquiescent Republicans: Obama Lobbies Congress to Support the Deal**

After the Deal was agreed upon by the P5+1 nations Obama and the members of the administration together with the Democratic leadership in Congress had to thwart the Republican onslaught on the agreement. The House secured a required number of votes 218 in support of H.Res. 367 which disapproved of the JCPOA. The resolution was orchestrated by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) (Haraldsson 2015).

In July tensions were high at the White House, Sen. Chuck Schumer(D-NY), opposed the Iran deal as well as many House and Senate Democrats. They were threatening to revolt against the nuclear agreement. This would have been a devastating blow to Obama on the international stage. In a private call, the Senate Democratic leader



Harry Reid (D-NV), secretly assured Secretary of State John Kerry that he would back the deal, though he would keep quiet about it publicly. He also helped lobby ambivalent Democrats. Thus, began the most aggressive and coordinated lobbying drive ever to take shape between congressional Democratic leaders and the Obama White House - which were frequently at odds over strategy and tactics. It was a strategy that focused exclusively on House and Senate Democrats and ignored the Republicans for most part. The reluctance of many Democrats to follow in suit underscored the sensitivity of the deal. There was a fear of a sharp political backlash from pro-Israel voters as well as their Republican foes. The Democrats were successful largely as a result of the lobbying effort that were far more targeted and relentless comparison to advertising campaigns aimed at scuttling the deal. For a president often criticized for being detached from Congress, Obama aggressively used his 'bully pulpit' to win over his party. He contacted 125 Democratic House members and senators repeatedly in an effort to garner support. According to Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said that the White House was "breaking arms and legs" to prevent Congress from voting down the deal. The wheeling and dealing culminated in a victory where Senate Democrats filibustered a resolution to reject the deal and House Democrats secured enough support to sustain a veto, thus the Senate handed Obama the most far-reaching international achievement of his presidency. Reid and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi traded key intelligence about uneasy Democrats, they dispatched powerful Cabinet officials garner support. Over the August recess, Pelosi gave the White House 57 names of House Democrats who were uncertain of the Iran deal, Obama called all of them as well as made 30 calls to Democratic lawmakers. Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin was involved in the lobbying process wherein he called almost everyone in his 46-member caucus. Vice President Joe Biden was also engaged, he made trips to help woo members of the Congress and eventually won over Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), an influential Jewish Democrat who faced fierce protests, including attacks with references to the Holocaust. Secretary Ernest Moniz, the Department of Energy and a nuclear physicist became the most prolific and effective lobbyist on the Hill. However,

Democrats still raised major concerns over inspections, reactions from other countries if the U.S. walked away from the deal and impact of sanction relief and threat Israel. When questions were raised, relevant Cabinet members would try to iron out those concerns. And when the pressure from the President was needed, he intensified his lobbying (Raju 2015).

Getting congressional leadership on board was crucial to the president's success. As leader of the House Democrats, Pelosi undertook an intense lobbying schedule (which conflicted with Netanyahu's lobbying of AIPAC and Congress), Pelosi engineered a long campaign, joined by the White House, to win over wavering House Democrats. She was faced with leveraging a shrunken Democratic minority. In an effort to thwart the Republican attack, she set up briefings with top administration officials and foreign diplomats from allied countries that were a party to the pact. Additionally, she enlisted outside support from the nation's top nuclear physicists, former military officials and other voices of authority. She had members who came out in support of the deal, including Rep. Eric Swalwell of Dublin and Mark DeSaulnier of Concord, published detailed op-eds in their local papers to explain their positions (Lockheed 2015),

Pelosi worked hand-in-glove with the White House, pinpointed skeptical Democrats and helped ensure Obama called them all. This strategy worked, as it was a marked shift for congressional Democrats, many of whom have complained that the president had not done enough over the last 7 years to build relationships with members of Congress. In the end, fewer than two dozen House Democrats ended up voicing opposition to the deal which was a display that House Democrats stacked up support throughout the lobbying process. This ensured the deal's survival. During the August recess, Pelosi sent Obama a list of 57 lawmakers that the President needed to personally call to secure their support. And she ensured that lawmakers who came out early in support of the deal were properly thanked by the White House. Senior administration officials including Treasury Secretary Jack Lew, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and Secretary of State John Kerry launched pre-emptive strikes by addressing lawmaker's

concern even before the members had a chance to voice them in one-on-one phone calls. Obama, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough and other top administration officials stayed in close contact with Pelosi and her team over the recess. The team orchestrated House Democrats to send out statements in support from new members almost daily during a time when news grinds to a halt in D.C. (French 2015).

While the White House and the Democrats were trying to gain support, P5+1 were apprehensive as to the ability and the extent to which Congress would play a role in the Iran Deal. Russia and China used their envoys on Capitol Hill in an effort to convince Senators from derailing the deal. The various anti-Iranian lobbies spent a great deal of time, money and effort in lobbying Congress to pass a resolution that would render the deal null and void.. These groups were the Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran and AIPAC. However on the other side there was J-Street who had been flying in prominent Israelis to visit with lawmakers, such as retired Gen. Amram Mitzna, a former mayor of Haifa and former member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Schumer was the man in line to be the next Democratic leader in the Senate. Emergency Committee for Israel (ECI) ran advertisements in New York, urging voters to call Schumer and tell him to oppose the deal. This was done prior to the inking of the deal. The Jewish community itself witnessed divisions as to whether to support this issue or not (Chang 2015). According to PEW, the need to reduce the influence of lobbies hovered around 43%-44%. Topping the list was terrorism followed by the economy and jobs, the list rounded up with global warming and global trade (Pew Jan 21st 2015). The White House attempted to rally Jewish groups to give the deal a chance their message “Kindly hold your fire”. There were a number of groups from J Street that were involved in the process. The New Security Action released a video that tied those who opposed the deal to those who supported the Iraq War (Palmer and Parti 2015) .

Netanyahu used the entire duration of his speech during the UNGA 2015 in an effort to cajole the world against the deal. The Republican Jewish Coalition, a major GOP lobbying group that used its 40,000 members to build grass-roots against the deal. The

group held conference calls with members, digital advertisements and social media to target key senators. The Anti-Defamation League, prepared a detailed list of questions it to distribute to members of Congress from both parties in hopes that they will probe the administration for answers (Palmer and Parti 2015).

The president was the greatest lobbying agent for the deal. The support from the White House as well as a coalition of antiwar and progressive organizations aimed at persuading Democrats and undecided members of Congress to support the nuclear agreement to vote against the Republican bid to block it (Davis 2015).

The deal was a sensitive issue to many Democrats who worried about pro-Israel backlash he Democrats succeeded largely because the lobbying effort to back the deal was far more targeted and relentless than the public push and advertising campaigns aimed at scuttling it, according to lawmakers in both parties. Senior administration officials made 250 calls to House members and senators (Raju 2015).

The Democrats, in spite of their vacillating opinions regarding the Iran Deal provided the president with the much needed political support required in an effort to implement the deal. They also protected Obama from vetoing the bill. This would have further dragged the proceedings and the debate, the Republicans also did not have the votes to pass the bill over presidential veto. For the international community, the vote was a victory for Obama's strategy of diplomacy. It was presidential leadership at its zenith. Not only were the administration and fellow Democrats united in their resolve, they were able to get apprehensive and ambivalent Democrats on board (Barrett, Raju et al 2015).

Though it seemed that the Democrats were not unanimous in voting for the deal, there had been a great deal of uncertainty. There were a number of Democrats who were at first ready to vote against the president but later came around. They included, Rep. Grace Meng, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and its subcommittee on the Middle East, wrote in a statement, "I strongly believe the world could and should

have a better deal The representative from New York's Sixth District, which includes a large portion of the borough of Queens, has a strong record of support for pro-Israel initiatives. New York's largely Democratic congressional delegation has been under careful watch in recent days for indication of how they will vote when Congress considers a resolution of either approval or disapproval of the Iran deal. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Rep. Eliot Engel both voiced serious doubts about the agreement. The administration, however in the end received a key vote of support from 17-term Jewish lawmaker Rep. Sander Levin in a statement, Levin explained his support for the deal by writing that he "believe[ed] that Israel, the region, and the world are far more secure if Iran does not move toward possession of a nuclear weapon" (Stoil 2015).

AIPAC lobbied members of Congress but failed in achieving the goals. Several AIPAC members met in Washington with more than 400 members of Congress from both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the issue. The group spent more than \$20 million on a 35-state ad campaign,. They attempted to coddle prominent Democrats like Sen. Charles Schumer and Rep. Eliot Engel, who are Jews and have large Jewish constituencies skeptical of the deal, remain undecided amid intense pressure from the White House. Chuck Shumer made it clear that pressure, party or political influence would not influence him. However, the jewish lobby was divided between AIPAC and J street. J Street was just one tool in the Obama administration's arsenal to win support for the deal (Labott, Walsh and Serfaty 2015). However, J Street, the major liberal Jewish advocacy group, on the other hand was lobbying members of Congress and their staffs to vote for the deal. They view eight to 10 members of the Senate and about 30 members of the House as true swing votes. They like the Democrats stacked Israeli security experts who supported the nuclear deal across the country to build support across the country while lawmakers were on recess. The organization spent more than \$5 million on its campaign for the deal (Kaplan 2015).

However when the final votes were tallied , the Democrats with the help of Sen Barbara Mukulski were able to ensure sufficient support from the Senate. Mukulski was the 34th Senator to support the deal. It was not considered a resounding victory for the Administration, but they were victorious nevertheless (Calabresi 2015).

The end result of the wrangling and lobbying led to a victory for the Democrats. They were able to block the Republican resolution that disapproved of the Iran nuclear deal from going to a final vote. As a result, President Barack Obama was not forced to veto the legislation that would have definitely dragged on for several more weeks. The vote on the procedural motion to move to a final vote, which required 60 votes failed 58 to 42. Forty-two Senate Democrats publicly backed the agreement, with just a handful of defections. The filibuster handed the Democrats a victory. The Republican condemned the Democrats for using the procedural vote to out maneuver them. According to Obama, the vote signaled “a victory for diplomacy, for American national security, and for the safety and security of the world,”. But the battle in Congress was far from over, the Senate Republicans began working on a revote on the measure to put additional pressure on Democrats and the House had also planned several votes against the deal. But sufficient congressional support had been secured for its implementation(Siddiqui 2015; Barrett Raju Walsh et al September 2015).

In the aftermath of the Senate vote, the House passed a resolution on a straight party-line vote that stated the president failed to comply with U.S. law on the Iran nuclear as he failed to provide Congress with details on so-called “side deals”. The non-binding measure was approved 245-186 and could lay the groundwork for a future legal challenge against the Obama administration. It was Rep. Peter Roskam (R-IL), who led the charge on the GOP resolution. Speaker John Boehner also supported the resolution. Like the Senate, House Democrats have been largely supportive of the White House's deal. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi called the president's handling of the debate and efforts to get it through Congress “masterful” and “dazzling.” Senate Democrats protected Obama on Iran vote(Siddiqui 2015; Barrett Raju Walsh et al September 2015).

## **An Assertive and Defiant Congress: The Implementation of the Iran Deal (2016)**

The year 2016 began with the implementation of the Iran deal and the simultaneous congressional disapproval of Obama's lifting of certain sanctions as part of the deal. The P5 along with President Obama were able to implement the deal as Iran complied with the international requirements. Congress for its part continued to be diligent in overseeing and addressing the weaknesses of the deal in an effort to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, the president in cognizance with the JCPOA had to lift sanctions, this aspect concerned the Republicans. The charge was led by new Speaker of the House (who replaced John Boehner), Paul Ryan. Ryan pledged to do "everything possible". The House Republicans attacked the gaps in the nuclear agreement specifically; Iran's ballistic missile program and the role of the IRGC. The partisan divide was evident, however Robert Menendez (D-NJ) stated that the international community should be focussed on Iran holding its end of the bargain. He further voiced apprehension against alleviation of sanctions. Therefore, there was some disagreement among the Democrats but not enough to create a major roadblock to the president's decision regarding the implementation of the Iran Deal (Diaz 2016).

Implementation of the deal meant that according to the IAEA, Iran had complied with the requirements set out by the JCPOA. This included; stalled construction of the Arak Research Reactor, enrichment capacity had been reduced to 3.67%. U-235, centrifuges had been reduced to 5060 IR-1. The IR-4, IR-5 IR6 and IR-8 centrifuges were not being used. The Ford plant, for R&D as well as uranium enrichment was disbanded (IAEA 2016). The Director General of the IAEA stated, that the inspectors on the ground verified that Iran had carried out all measures required under the JCPOA. "This paves the way for the IAEA to begin verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the agreement, as requested by the U.N. Security Council and authorized by the IAEA Board. Relations between Iran and the IAEA now enter a new phase". (IAEA Director General 2016)

Congress though in some way deferred to the president, simultaneously asserted its role in the form of legislation with respect to the Iran Deal. Both Houses passed bills with bipartisan support with respect to Iran keeping its end of the bargain. During the hearings held at the time, Democrats rallied behind the president, they showed support for the president but at the same time were apprehensive as to whether Iran was trustworthy. With successive IAEA reports, the Democrats were put at ease with respect to Iran this was not true of the Republicans. The Republicans across the ideological spectrum were displeased with Obama's sanction waiver. According to them, such a move of releasing money to Iran would be detrimental for regional security. As it would free up funds in Iran to further fund Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

In spite of congressional members raising objections to the implementing of the deal, President Obama announced that deal what come into force as. Iran had met the requirement stipulated in the JCPOA. During the hearings, the members of the administration made it clear that it had taken all the cautionary steps prior to Implementation Day. The Republicans continued to be troubled by issues concerning human rights, the members also had a problem with Russia's control over there the uranium shipments by Iran. Congressional say in the matter of the Iran deal was concentrated on the review process as well as sanctions on the nuclear and other programs such as the ballistic missiles. This is where congressional assertion began and ended. They had limited control over whether the president certified or decertified the deal. On the other hand it did not put an end to the anti-deal rhetoric that consumed Washington during the 2016 election. In addition to this, Iran also had access to \$50 billion. The Republican leadership cautioned the release of \$100 billion to finance terrorist groups. In the aftermath of the implementation, Iran tested a ballistic missile which added to the fury of the Republican. That Congress pledged to do 'everything possible' to prevent a nuclear Iran (Diaz 2016).

During the hearings held on the implementation of the deal, the sanctions, the ballistic missile program and terror financing as well as the access to funds were the



overarching themes of the hearing. The members of the administration, attempted to clarify to Congress matters that pertained to whether the administration would impose additional sanctions on the ballistic missile program as well as the financing of terror groups. The case of human rights abuses was also a bone of contention during the hearing. There was concern that Iran's enriched uranium went to Russia , the members of the administration affirmed that the material was secure. The hearings also made it clear that though the House was split over the deal, they seemed unified in their commitment to sanctions. The hearing also addressed, the involvement of Iranian banks and their subsidiaries as well as sanctioning these entities. There were also proposals to designate Maha Air (the Quads Force Arline) under UN antiterrorism sanctions (CHRG July 14th 2015). An additional hearing was held by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, the statement by Robert Joseph (Former Under Secretary of Arms Control ) discussed recommendations which included congressional rejection, relief of sanctions on Iran for upholding its commitments, establish a team of non-partisan experts to check Iran's compliance and expand missile defense in the region. Mark Dubowitz of the Defense of Democracies, discussed the sunset provisions within the deal that would allow Iran to reach the nuclear threshold. Ilan Goldberg of the Center for New American Security, in his statement to Congress, stated that though the deal was imperfect if implemented properly would deter Iran's nuclear program. In addition to this the deal is a far better then the alternative. He also addressed the implementation and oversight by the IAEA (CHRG July 23rd 2015).

During 2016, Congress was in the process of passing legislation that dealt with Iran. This included Amendment to the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 2016 (H.R. 2018). In addition to this, there was the U.S. Financial System Protection Act - the bill "applied to transfers of funds to or from Iran, or for the direct or indirect benefit of an Iranian person or the government of Iran". The period of application was stipulated from on or after January 1, 2016, until the president certified to the appropriate congressional committees that the government of Iran has

ceased activity. The bill passed the House; 246 - 181 (H.R.4992, 2016). The No Dollars for Iran Act prohibited “the Department of the Treasury from issuing a license under any law, including the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations, that would permit a person to conduct offshore dollar clearing outside of the U.S. financial system” that was aimed at benefitting Iran (H.R.4898 2016).

Republican Rep John Ratcliff sponsored the Iran Cyber Sanctions Act of 2016. This bill required “the president to report to Congress at least every 180 days regarding significant activities that undermined cybersecurity conducted by persons on behalf of or at the direction of the government of Iran (including members of paramilitary organizations such as Ansar-e-Hezbollah and Basij-e Mostaz'afin) against the United States (including U.S. persons, entities, or federal, state, or local governments) (H.R.5222 2016).

The Iran Ballistic Missile Sanctions Act of 2016 - the bill amended the Iran-Iraq Arms Non-Proliferation Act of 1992 to cover ballistic missile or related technology. The Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 was amended to include an extension through December 31, 2031, and sanctioned entities and persons that acquired or developed ballistic missiles. The Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 was amended to include a “bi-annual report from the president to Congress”. It identified persons involved in Iran’s in ballistic missile program. The president was authorized to “block and prohibit all transactions in property this included Aerospace Industries Organization, the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group, or the Shahid Bakeri Industrial Group” (S.2725 2016). Therefore the bill gave the authority to the president to carry out the sanction as well as the certification process.

In addition to this, Congress put forward Iran Terrorism and Human Rights Sanctions Act of 2016, it prescribed sanctions on the IRGC, Mahan Air, Iran's support of terrorism, Iran's human rights abuses, certain Iranian individuals, persons who conduct transactions with or on behalf of certain Iranian individuals, and financial institutions that engage in certain transactions on behalf of persons involved in human rights abuses or

that export sensitive technology to Iran. By the resolution, the Department of the Treasury was to establish and publish in the Federal Register an IRGC watch list. The bill was introduced by Sen. Mark Krik. However it died in Congress ( S. 2726 2016) .

Congress also introduced the the Iran Terror Finance Transparency Act, that reaffirmed the right for the U.S. to use all available options, including the use of military force to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The Democrats introduced The Zero Tolerance for Terror Act , the bill was sponsored by Rep Joseph P Kennedy III (D-MA) (H.R.4333 2016). The Visa Waiver program Improvement and Terrorist Travel Prevention Act Of 2015 was introduced by Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI), the act amended the Immigration and Nationality Act regarding the visa waiver program to require that an alien (H.R 158 2015) The Iran Ballistic Missile Prevention and Sanctions Act of 2016 and other actions on ballistic missiles. This bill directed the president to impose five or more sanctions with respect to a person (or an entity) that knowingly transferred or advanced conventional weapons or ballistic missiles program of Iran (H.R.4342 2016).

The bill that caused friction between the president and Congress as well as Congress and Iran was the extension of sanctions under the the Iran Sanctions Act. The sanctions as per the 1996 law were to expire at the end of 2016 and therefore the Republican-controlled Senate passed a 10 year extension of sanctions against Iran. It passed 99-0 and near unanimous approval from the House 419-1. The mere unanimity by which the bill passed into law showed bipartisan approval. The White House did not put up much of a fight though they tried to get an extension. The White House also stated that the Act would not interfere with the nuclear agreement (Zengerle 2016. the Act also ensured that future Presidents could impose sanctions. In passing the Act, the Congress signaled a warning to the Iranian regime (De Luce 2016). The Iranians saw the extension of sanctions as a violation of the nuclear deal. Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA.), the sponsor of the extension legislation, stated that adoption “ensures the U.S. retains its ability to hold the [Iranian] regime accountable”. The Obama administration maintained that the 10-year extension of the Iran Sanctions Act was unnecessary, but said the action does not violate

U.S. commitments under the nuclear deal. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the extension was not necessary for accountability to the nuclear deal and that, had the act expired, the administration “would continue to have all the authorities” needed to reimpose sanctions quickly (Davenport 2017). During the signing statement at the administration displayed that the law “unnecessary” however it was still willing to support the bill as it had no choice. The series of pieces of legislations issued during 2016 portray that there was a bipartisan need to to act against tIran in other fields other than nuclear security.

### **Congress and the Obama Presidency: Deference, Acquiescence, Assertive or Active**

Throughout the 8 years, the president’s relationship with members of Congress was tumultuous to say the least. The highly partisan nature of Congress created an impediment to the president’s policies. This was especially seen with the rise of the emergent of the ‘Tea Party’ the ultra right wing of the Republicans party who made avenues in the 2010 election. The Republicans in Congress played on the president’s reluctance to use force, this was especially seen in the case of Syria.

On the matter of Iran, there was initial support for engagement however the Republicans were skeptical about the lack of preconditions. In the aftermath of the 2009 crackdown, this initial support waned and Congress Democrats and Republicans alike began to put forth resolutions to sanction Iran as well as promote Democratic institutions. However the last leg of the Obama administration during the 2016 was dealing with the Presidential election. The Republican candidates as expected.

During the first two years of the Obama presidency Congress was both assertive as well as active. However though the numerous bills put forth during this time, many of them died in Congress and did not come to fruition. However when bills were passed by Congress, Obama most of the time signed the bill into law either because the president did not have enough votes in Congress that would block Congress from passing them over presidential veto. Therefore, President Obama was forced to sign a number of bills

that sanctioned Iran. For the administration, there was a feeling that these sanctions could impede their broader strategy. Therefore, Congress was considered to be an assertive Congress irrespective of partisan control when it came to sanctions.

However there was a difference when it came to the filibuster that eventually gave the president his victory over the Republicans in Congress. The Democrats were able to skillfully, block the vote that would eventually allow Congress to block the deal from being implemented. In filibustering the vote, the Democrats in Congress were able to hand Obama his victory over the Iran Deal. However, though Democrats were successful in blocking the vote, prior to the vote and the signing of the JCPOA, Democrats supported the Iran Review Act, that gave Congress the power to review the agreement. The bill became law with bipartisan support. Most of the sanctions that were imposed on Iran were passed on bipartisan lines, however Congress under Obama was considered to be heavily polarized.

Congress whether it was under the control of the Democrats or the Republicans asserted itself in Obama's policy towards Iran. However, when it counted, the Democrats rallied support for their leaders when it came to the procedural vote which was the vote to end all voting on the Iran Deal. The filibuster gave Obama the political cover needed for the JCPOA to come to fruition. Thus, though the Democrats unlike the Republicans of 2001 and 2002 that passed the authorization for use of force nevertheless gave the President a decisive victory.

Throughout his 8 years in office, the Democrats also supported the president's patience to negotiate with Iran. But at the same time safeguarded themselves politically by co-authoring, voting as well as pushing for sanctions on Iran. These sanctions according to Obama could have derailed the negotiation process however with bipartisan support for these there was little the President could do. During the Arab Spring, Obama's delayed response further antagonized the situation as the Democrats tried to provide political cover for the president however it was only successful to a certain extent which was when the President decided to speak out against the atrocities and the crack downs.

During the Green movement , there was bipartisan support from many in Congress for the protestors, here again Obama's delayed response though strategic was considered as a *faux pas* by many Democrats. Obama's strategy towards Iran , put many Democrats at political risk either as a result of their jewish leanings or because their constituencies were made up of a large group of jews who were influenced by Netanyahu or AIPAC. The members of Congress tried to distance themselves from Obama while at the same time support the president's policies.

## Chapter V

### FRIENDS AND FOES

#### Obama, the P5+1, Regional Allies and Iran

*“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival of liberty”*

*John F. Kennedy, 35<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America*

## **Introduction**

In the framing of foreign policy, presidents not only have to take into consideration domestic factors but external factors as well. This specifically pertains to U.S. allies. The previous chapters have addressed the domestic constraints and enablers with respect to Obama's policy on Iran. This chapter seeks to understand the role of the international community; this includes the P5+1 as well as the Gulf states and Israel. The regional role is an important dynamic as they would be most affected by the strategy. In addition to this, it is interwoven with domestic politics of the U.S. as a result of the interest groups.

The power of the president lies in the power to persuade. This was never more true than in the case of Obama dealing with allies both among the P5 and the Middle East. In doing so, a president is aware of his environmental constraints. The power to persuade is also very often the power to bargain. Presidents also tend to have personal power this includes the constitution as well as the standing of the President in the system together with the personality (Shapiro 2000). For Obama, Congress as mentioned in the previous chapter was assertive in their beliefs on Iran, the partisanship aided in the President bucking at times. However as a result of partisanship, the President was able to block the Republicans. Obama had to work together with the P5 indoors to negotiate the deal. He also had to persuade the Middle East allies of a deal by shoring up US support. Therefore throughout his years in the White House (vis-a-vis Iran) Obama was playing a role of 'reassurer-in-chief'.

The chapter is divided into two major sets of allies. The first being the P5+1 that were actually involved in the negotiation process. The second include the regional allies specifically Saudi Arabia and Israel who though were not part of the negotiations created a great deal of trouble for the president.



## **Obama, P5 & Iran: From Olive Branch to the Imposition of Sanctions**

When Obama was elected as president, there was a great deal of hope among the European powers as a result his rhetoric. This was especially true with Iran and the unclenched fist without preconditions. During the Bush administration, the Europeans had led the negotiations without much help from the U.S. They were also apprehensive about Obama's direct diplomacy as they feared that the president would go soft on Iran in an effort to get a deal. The French and the British were pushing for a stronger stance. There was also a modicum of resentment that the U.S. was going to lead the process. Therefore, the Europeans attempted to adopt a rigid line as they wanted to maintain their leverage (Parsi 2012b).

On coming to the White House, President Obama set the ground running when it came to his agenda mindful of the 'honeymoon period'. The small window a president has to accomplish his the important parts of his legislative agenda. The outreach to Iran though not at the top of his agenda was nevertheless an important aspect. The P5 nations that had been negotiating with Iran during the Bush administration did not receive direct support from the administration. With Obama's announcement of direct participation in the nuclear negotiations as well as the the encouragement from the White House was a welcomed change by the P5 nations. The president used the E.U. chief negotiator Javier Solana, to invite Iran to new talks. According to spokesperson from the State Department, the U.S. was willing to negotiate with Iran regarding its nuclear program if Iran was willing to do so (Parsi 2012b; CNN 2009a).

Obama's overtures to Iran that included the letter to the Ayotullah and the Nowruz video greeting sent a reassuring message to the P5+1(MacAskill 2009). There was a major setback to the diplomatic route with the Iranian election (June 2009 ) and the subsequent crackdown. President Sarkozy spoke out against the protests and stated that the situation was "extremely alarming" as well as the nature of the crackdown that was"totally disproportionate"as it left eight people dead. The Italian Foreign Minister (not part of the P5)stated that the violence on the street and the deaths of protesters were

“unacceptable”. In the U.S., the congressional Republicans and Democrats condemned the Iranian regime. However, President Obama and his team had lengthy discussions with their contacts in Iran who advised against involvement (Clinton 2014). There were demonstrations in European cities that called for an end to the violence. Even the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon expressed doubts about crackdown (Tran 2009; CNN 2009d).

In September, at the G20 Summit, Obama along with Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Sarkozy announced to the world the construction of secret nuclear facility at Fordow (near Qom). On the sidelines of the Pittsburg Summit, Obama met with members of the P5 nations in an effort to devise a strategy to deal with Iran. Obama stated that “Iran's action raised grave doubts” over its peaceful nuclear program. He reiterated a stronger stance which included sanctions. However, the Iranians pre-empted the attack by the U.S. in providing the IAEA with information regarding Fordow. The revelation of Qom was the backdrop for the October meeting between Iran and the P5. (AP Sep 2009).

The discovery of the Fordow site brought Russia and China on the same page as rest of the world. It provided them with a choice; either to join the world powers into propelling Iran to give up their nuclear program or be sanctioned. The two countries, had been skeptical about imposing sanctions on Iran (Rachman 2009). Russia and China both shared and continue to share strong economic ties with Iran, when it came to UN sections they avoided a cote on the sanctions in the previous years.

Though Obama was defiant in his tone, PM Brown and President Sarkozy were far stricter in their tone. In spite of this, President Obama and Brown did not rule out the use military force. Brown stated, “we rule nothing out”. But stated that sanctions were the “preferred route” to bringing pressure on Tehran. Brown supported financial sanctions (Weaver 2009). Moscow issued a tough statement as well, describing the previously undisclosed Iranian facility as a breach of the UNSC. But the statement also seemed to leave room for Iran to still prove that its nuclear program was “peaceful”. The Kremlin further stated the IAEA should investigate and Iran should cooperate with the

investigation. The Kremlin laid down a deadline for this on October 1st prior to the P5+1 meeting (Rozen 2009). Thus, the facility at Qom provided a bargaining chip for the P5 however, it was clear from the state that Iran was a resilient negotiator.

In October the two sides met in Geneva for the first time since Obama was elected President. The timing and the bargaining chip used by the P5 was perfect as the TRR required fuel rods. With the Iranians declining the fuel-swap, the P5 along with the U.S. moved towards sanctions. For Obama, the move towards sanctions was not ideal but domestic pressure compelled him to make the transition.

### **The P5+1 Move Towards Sanctions**

In the aftermath of Iran's rejection of the P5 proposal, the Iranians put forth a counter proposal that if not accepted they would begin enrichment at 20%. Though the negotiation strategy seemed conciliatory in tone, was tough diplomacy. The P5 were willing to give in to some of the terms but not all. However, Iran delayed its response to the agreement. The P5+1 were scheduled to meet in Vienna in an effort to iron out the chinks in the proposal specially relating to the technical aspects. It became clear that sanctions were the only option. In shifting towards international sanctions, Congress had already begun its pre-emptive attack. The president was able to stave off their onslaught as there was a possibility that it would have diminished the impact of the UN sanctions (Parsi 2012b). Through the UN, the P5 began preparing for the fourth round of sanctions that eventually culminated in the imposition of UN Resolution 1929. For sanctions to have the desired effect, all the members of the P5 would have to support it. In an effort to do so, the Obama found it difficult to get Russia and China on board. The EU for its part was supportive of the move towards sanction. Among the Europeans, the French were especially supportive of the punitive measures. The Germans were in favor of targeted sanctions, ones that would strike at the leadership (Parsi 2012b)

After a great deal of persuasion as well as bargaining and compromise, the Russians and the Chinese agreed to the sanctions and in June 2010 the new sanctions

came into being. After months of persuading Russia, there was a shift and they agreed to join the UN in sanctioning Iran. The sanctions targeted the IRGC that was connected to commercial projects, a huge military complex, shipping and insurance. The sanctions also expanded the arms embargo. (UN Resolution 1929; MacAskill 2010b). During the negotiations over sanctions, China and Russia called for a narrower set of measures than the Americans and western Europeans. While dealing with the sanction the U.S. and China had another bone of contention to deal with; the arms sales to Taiwan and Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama. Though Russia and China agreed on UN sanctions they were against sanctions on Iran's energy sector (Borger and MacAskill 2010). There were many within the U.S. that were uneasy about granting leeway to Russia and China as well as their role in setting limits on U.N. sanctions. Obama had to deal with "foot-dragging" from both countries that have close ties with Iran (Phillips 2010).

Beijing's reluctance was for strategic purposes, but at the same time China wanted to display to the U.S. and the international community that it was a "responsible stakeholder" regarding the nuclear program as well as maintain its strategic partnership with Iran. On January 16, 2010 P5+1, met in New York to deliberate the way ahead on Iran's nuclear issue, soon after Iran rejected the fuel swap. US and Britain pushed for sanctions while Chinese Ambassador to the U.N. Zhang Yesui stated that imposing tougher sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program was a "poor idea while diplomatic negotiations remain possible". The Chinese called for more negotiations with Iran and 'patience'. The Chinese counted on Russia to stonewall the P5+1. President Medvedev announced a ban on the sales of the S-300 missiles, an advanced air defense and other weapon systems to Iran. Moscow's move was designed to persuade the U.S. to give up its plan to deploy an anti-missile system in the Polish-Russian border (Chang 2011). Prior to this, Obama in an attempt to pushback on the Russian sale, persuaded allies like Saudi to intervene. The Saudis offered to buy the S-300 (Parsi 2012b). After Beijing agreed to sanctions it favored softer sanctions therefore the sanctions that were in the first draft, were watered down (Chang 2011).

With China agreeing to sanction Iran, the administration was faced with an additional problem. This was caused by Turkey and Brazil. In an attempt to play the role of mediator, the leadership in the two countries were able to strike a deal with Iran. This was unacceptable to the P5 as well as confidence in their ability to strike a deal was limited therefore the P5 continued with the sanction route. In spite of this, on June 9th 2010, the sanctions finally came to a vote - 12-2. Turkey and Brazil abstained (Kessler 2010).

There was very little that the P5+1 nations disagreed on during the nuclear talks. In December, another meeting of the P5 was orchestrated this time at the behest of the Iranians. Tensions among the world powers were mounting, there was pressure from Israel who threatened to attack, there was tremendous domestic pressure for Obama. With these constraints, the IAEA Report on 23rd November 2010, stated that Iran had not provided the necessary cooperation to permit the Agency to confirm that all nuclear material was for peaceful purposes. Iran had not implemented the requirements contained in the relevant resolutions of the Board of Governors and the Security Council, including implementation of the Additional Protocol. This was an essential confidence building mechanism to convince the international community of the peaceful nature of the nuclear program and resolve outstanding questions. The IAEA recommended that Iran clarify the “outstanding issues” that raised concerns about possible military dimensions to its nuclear program. This included providing access to all sites, equipment, persons and documents requested by the Agency (IAEA 2010). The next meeting was scheduled for January 2011 in Istanbul, the meeting achieved few but no tangible results. Tehran was feeling the pinch of sanctions according to many Iranian experts (Borger 2011). Therefore the P5 made limited avenues. However where the P5 was limited, Obama’s backchannel made up for.

The year 2011 also brought with it a ‘democratic wave’ one that Obama had to solicit the aid of the U.N. and even NATO members. The Arab Spring that began in Tunisia spread throughout the Muslim world, the U.S. had a choice to either support its

autocratic allies or support the democratic process that could have untenable results. Obama though supported the Democratic wave, was skeptical given the U.S. allies in the region. With respect to Iran, the the P5+1 took a backseat while the E.U. stepped up its sanctions with Iran. The E.U. extended sanctions to more than 100 new entities to a list of companies and people. Additionally, the sanctions aimed at freezing assets and visa bans, as well as added to a range of financial and trade sanctions the EU's 27 governments had already imposed on Tehran. The sanctions encompassed the German-based EIH bank, which specialized in business in Iran. The U.S. had already banned business with EIH. This was a display that the U.S. and the E.U. along with the P5+1 were all on the same page (Brunnstorm and Pawlak 2011). The sanction addressed violations of human rights it included a freeze on assets and visa bans for individuals and entities responsible for grave human rights violations. In addition, it included, a ban on exports of equipment that might be used for internal repression and equipment related to monitoring telecommunications (European Council 2011).

There were some within the P5 partners who were further angered by Iran's behavior. This was in reference to the attack on the British embassy in Iran by protestors. The attack was condemned by the British government who threatened severe consequences. Downing Street was supported by the White House as well as the French (Borger and Dehghan 2011).

### **The Elections and Re-election: Opportunities and Challenges**

The year 2012 witnessed a wave of new leadership among the P5 as well as the renewal in leadership in the U.S.. In Russia , Britain and France new leaders took the centre stage with Putin, David Cameron and Francois Hollande respectively. In the U.S., President Obama won his second term, thus giving him greater breathing room but simultaneously constraining him in dealing with various matters.

In 2012, the U.S. by way of the P5 had few inconsequential gains. The negotiation process had proved to be fruitless while the sanctions were crippling the economy this

included the unilateral U.S. sanctions. There was hope that with a second term Obama, would continue to press for diplomacy as opposed to military action. According to PEW, Obama's ratings were higher in Europe than any other European leader. When it came to military action, 63% Americans would support military action, compared with 51% in France and Britain and 50% in Germany. Only 24% of Russians would back such a move (Stokes Nov 8th 2012 PEW). There was also some disagreement among the P5 regarding sanctions, however the difference was miniscule. As per PEW, 80% within the U.S. agreed to back to tougher sanction, while 79% in Britain 74% in France, 80% in Germany and 46% in Russia and 38% in China agreed to tougher sanction (Pew 2012b).

With the change in leadership especially in France, Hollande was willing and wanted to take a tougher stance on Iran than the U.S., this would eventually create friction between the Washington and Paris but were eventually ironed out easily with reassurances from Obama and eventually the deal itself.

In March 2012, the British PM visited U.S., in an effort shore up the "greatest alliance the world has ever known". Iran was very much part of the agenda. Together they were united against a nuclear Iran, as well as a diplomatic solution to the problem together with the E.U. oil embargo. The two agreed to continue to "keep up the pressure on Iran" (Obama March 14 2012). President Obama met with President Hollande prior to the G8 Summit. The leaders discussed a range of issues afflicting the international community including the possibility of a nuclear Iran. The meeting also came prior to the Baghdad meeting, according to reports, much time was spent in dealing with Iran. The G8 members also believed in the trajectory the P5 had taken. More focus was placed on Afghanistan and withdrawal of French forces (Nakamura 2012 ).

At the G8 Summit (2012), the topic of Iran featured prominently during proceedings. The members were more or less on the same page with respect to Iran's nuclear program. The year 2013 brought with it some promise, it was the year of elections in Iran. The P5 hoped that the results would be promising to the negotiation process as the two sides had made no progress and time was running out (Black 2013).

The P5 were also willing to tap into oil stockpiles if necessary and continue to strengthen sanctions on Iran. The meetings held prior to the Baghdad meeting (Mason 2012). The administration during 2012 mostly focussed on working the bilateral channel as the P5 avenue proved fruitless.

The election of Rouhani was seen by many as a ray of hope in the flailing negotiations between the P5 and Iran. In the aftermath of Rouhani's election the leaders the P5+1 were unanimous in their support for renewed negotiation and a willingness to support diplomacy (BBC 2013). Though Rouhani at first was skeptical about a bilateral engagement with the U.S. rather than the P5 but eventually agreed when Obama's negotiating team conceded to allowing enrichment as per the NPT. The Iranians agreed to a meeting, between August and November the two sides met about seven times unbeknownst to the rest of the P5 (Parsi 2017). At November Geneva meeting between the P5+1 and Iran were close to achieving a stopgap agreement.

The British PM attested to negotiate with Iran on his own, with being the first PM to call and talk to the Iranian President in nearly over ten years. The conversation revolved around the bilateral relationships between the two nations as well as the installment of a charge d'affairs. The two also agreed that a great deal of progress had been made. During the debates, the U.S. and its P5 allies though agreed that enrichment would be part of any deal, they were unwilling to put their acceptance in writing for fear of domestic constraints. It was during these debates that the French and German's asserted for a stricter deal. France's disagreement with the deal was in part driven by the idea of currying favor with the regional countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel. The trade between France and the Middle East was lucrative to the French economy. In addition to this, the French complaints were also based on the nature of the agreement; it was a short term deal to slow down or stop elements of the Iranian nuclear program in return for limited sanctions relief. The French complained that the text, was mostly drafted by Iran and the U.S. and had been presented as a *fait accompli*. They therefore did not want to be



forced into it (Borger and Dehghan 2013a; Borger et al. 2013b; Butt 2013). However there were numerous unconfirmed reports regarding the French disagreement.

On the 24th of November, the negotiators finally reached an interim agreement. The agreement was to last 6 months however the Iranians were granted extensions as they continued to comply with the IAEA as negotiations were ongoing. The agreement was considered to be a major concession on the part of the P5. Obama had to also hold off Congress from passing sweeping sanctions. During the negotiations, the debate was contentious. Other than France there were two additional problems the U.S. had to deal with; Russia and China. The Iranian allies, pushed the U.S. and others to accept concessions that would allow Iran the right to retain enrichment (Gearan 2014). The interim agreement stated that while negotiations were ongoing Iran would freeze its enrichment program in return for this, they were granted limited relief in terms of sanction (Rhodes 2018).

### **From JPA to JCPOA**

The P5+1 negotiations began in February 2014 in an effort to reach a final agreement the deadline was set for July 2014. However, neither side to come to an agreement therefore the P5 had to push back the deadline a number of times in an effort to reach the final agreement. Throughout the period of negotiations, the IAEA certified that Iran was in compliance with the JPA, therefore there was adequate justification for continued negotiations (Katzman 2013b). The E.U. foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton stated that two sides had identified the issues needed to be addressed in an effort to reach a final agreement. She also stated that it was the first step and there was a great deal of work that needed to be done therefore fired on the side of caution. Throughout 2014, attention was also diverted from Iran as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In addition to this, the rise and growth of IS, that further complicated the situation with Iran. The views of the public had changed, battling the IS was considered a greater threat. The number of those who thought the U.S. did too little to solve global problems doubled. This also crossed partisan barriers (PEW Aug 28 2014a).

In addition to Obama's global problems, the domestic environment was not very optimistic or supportive of the policy towards Iran. There were more Americans that disapproved of the interim agreement. However, as the P5 and Iran crossed every decline, faith in the negotiating process began to diminish. The domestic environment was apprehensive over nuclear negotiations. The deadline was set for the end of March 2015, the French along with their new leadership was at odds with the U.S. The French Ambassador to the UN stated that the progress made by Iran was "insufficient". In addition, the French were apprehensive about lifting sanctions, as well as the number of centrifuges. The French opposition had been growing for months. According to multiple media reports, France took a firmer stance while negotiating the deal. As negotiations went beyond the March deadline with the new deadline being set as June 30th, skepticism continued to grow. The public display of France's skepticism and reluctance angered Washington as they were apprehensive about a disagreement with the French could lead to a lack of support for the comprehensive agreement. The French posturing during negotiations was in part due to their suspicions of the nature of negotiations which looked as though it was a bilateral than multilateral (Collinson 2015). Another reason for Paris's ambivalence over a deal with Iran was its relations with Saudi Arabia and other Sunni countries in the region. France had a sizeable economic stake in maintaining good relations with the Gulf monarchies. A \$3 billion arms deal with Lebanon paid for by Saudi Arabia, as well as a sale of Dassault Rafales to the UAE and Qatar in a near future. The negotiations were for the sale of 36 Rafales were in their final stages. France recently sold 24 to Egypt for a total of 5.2 billion euros (Kayali 2015).

After the Lausanne meeting adjourned, in an effort to bring France on the same playing field as the U.S, Kerry met with his French and German counterparts in an effort to heal the rift. President Obama, also called President Hollande in effort iron out the differences and presented a united front. The French disagreed with the U.S. when it came to phased alleviation of sanctions. Obama had a battle on three fronts; Congress, regional allies and France. When it came to lifting of U.N. sanctions - France wanted only a symbolic sanction alleviation (The White House March 20 2015; Borger and

Roberts 2015a). Though the French had reservations, negotiations continued and finally the deal was reached on July 14th 2015. As the talks were coming to a close, the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, told reporters, “I hope we’re arriving finally at the last phase of these marathon negotiations. I believe so” (Borger 2015).

After the interim agreement came into force in January 2014, and negotiations towards a more comprehensive agreement took place, the IAEA reported that Iran had held its part of the JPA. In December 2014 the report stated that Iran had not enriched uranium above 5% U-235 at any of its declared facilities and had not operated cascades in an interconnected configuration at any of its declared facilities and continued to provide daily access to the enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordow. The same was true of the 20th April 2015 and July 2015 reports (IAEA 19th Dec 2014).

During the negotiations, Kerry displayed a ‘care a dam attitude’ and avoided a display of eagerness for fear that the U.S. would look as though it was capitulating. The strategy was also employed as Congressional eyes were hovering. In the end though Congress were able to intervene and pass the Iran Review Act, the JCPOA came into being on July 14, 2015. Implementation of the deal was to follow after Iran complied with the agreement (Toosi and Crowley 2015).

In the aftermath of the agreement, Congress asserted itself, though the negotiation process there were many that disagreed with aspects of the deal this included France, Russia and China. With the deal in place and with Congress having the last say, the P5+1 in one voice turned to Congress in an effort to protect the deal. There was once again convergence of ideas. The members of the P5 began to lobby Congress to support the agreement. Top diplomats from Russia and China joined other envoys from across the globe in a meeting with 30 Senate Democrats on Capitol Hill to address concerns over the nuclear agreement (Hudson 2015).

The EU Ambassador David O’Sullivan, played an important role in lobbying the Hill. The German Ambassador, Peter Wittig, hosted members of the House in an effort to

win their support for the deal. Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to Washington, met with Bob Corker. While the Europeans worked in cognizance with the State Department (Crowley 2015 ).

In the aftermath of the deal, the P5 nations struck billion dollar deals with Iran. This included a \$17 billion deal with Boeing 50 narrow-body 737 MAX aircraft and 30 long-haul 777s, split equally between the 777-300ER. The Boeing contract, the biggest Iran-U.S. deal since the fall of the Shah, cleared major technical hurdles and was implemented. Trade between Iran and world powers reopened in return for curbs on Iran's nuclear activities. A Boeing statement said the Iranian contract would support tens of thousands of U.S. jobs for the 777-300ER jets and nearly 100,000 U.S. aerospace jobs for the whole package (Hepher and Aboudi 2016 ).

### **With Friends Like These... : Obama, Israel and Saudi Arabia**

In negotiating the Iran Deal, the president had a great deal of trouble convincing the regional allies to support his strategy. These allies had a great deal to gain and lose when it came to the deal as Iran is a contentious neighbor. The president's power of persuasion in the case of the Middle East allies was through the avenue of reassurance. This took the form of meetings with the leadership, bilateral state-state meetings as well as military and foreign aid.

Relations between Iran and the regional powers (under the Shah) were relatively cordial. Though the Sunni-Shia divide existed it was less pronounced as the Shah was more westernized. However, the quest for dominance was at the top of the agenda. Iran's relations with Israel the U.S. main ally in the region were not antagonistic. However, these relations underwent a shift with the Revolution, thus embroiling Washington's major allies in the region to go on the offense. This was especially true as a result of Iranian policy to expand the revolution. It also called for an end to Israel. Therefore, the enmity shared by U.S. regional allies was born out of the revolution as well as Iran's support of organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah that have committed acts of terror against the state of Israel.

Iran is a Shia State with a Shia majority as well as governed by Shia's and is overpowered and outnumbered by Sunni leadership in the region. In the aftermath of the Iraq invasion and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the regional dynamics underwent a change; it led to the installment of a Shia government Iraq. According to CRS Report of 2004 - Iran comprised of 89% of Muslims that are Shia, in Saudi there are 10% -11% Shia, the UAE 15% were Shia. In Syria, the Alivites that are a Shia sect together with the Assad regime alignment with the Iran. However the non-Sunni muslims only make up 16% of the population while the Sunni's make up 74% of the population. In Bahrain, Shia's make up 70% of the muslim population, in Yemen Shia's make 30% of the population. The minority of Shia's in the GCC countries that align themselves with Iran (Armanios 2004).

In the aftermath of Khomeini's death the leadership in Iran made overtures not only to the West but the regional as well. Under Rafsanjani and Khatami as well as dialed back the rhetoric. However there was a reversal in policy with the coming of Ahmadinejad. The IRGC's regional motives have come under scanner by the U.S. as well as region. Relations with the U.S. though were still hostile to some extent, were less confrontational. The failure of the Iraq War as well as the reasons for the war once came to light created a trust deficit. U.S support in the region began to wane, this was especially true among the Muslim countries (Forting 2007).

As part of his campaign agenda, Obama mentioned the need to stand by Israel and the need to strengthen and deepen cooperation in matters pertaining to defense an effort to deal with terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah as well as achieve a lasting peace (Obama 2008). Obama also adhered to reset relations with the region. Obama's speech at the UN reiterated his strategy.

*"I am committed to diplomacy that opens a path to greater prosperity and a more secure peace for both nations if they live up to their obligations. But if the governments of Iran and North Korea choose to ignore international standards; if they put the pursuit of nuclear weapons ahead*

*of regional stability and the security and opportunity of their own people; if they are oblivious to the dangers of escalating nuclear arms races in both East Asia and the Middle East – then they must be held accountable”*

(Obama Speech UN Sept 23 2009).

The image of the U.S. improved markedly in most parts of the world, reflecting global confidence in Barack Obama. In many countries opinions of the U.S. rose to pre-Bush levels. The most notable increase occurred in Indonesia, where people were well aware of Obama’s family ties to the country and favorable ratings of the U.S. nearly doubled. However, for the most part, opinions of the U.S. among Muslims in the Middle East remained largely unfavorable and skeptical at best. This was despite some positive movement in the numbers in Jordan and Egypt. Animosity toward the U.S., however, continued to run deep in Turkey, the Palestinian territories and Pakistan. Belief that Obama will “do the right thing in world affairs” did strike a tone with the leadership in many countries but they were still uncertain. However, the Cairo address did not have positive ratings as expected. Before the speech, 76% of Israelis questioned had a favorable view of the U.S., but after the speech that rating fell to 63%. Similarly, confidence in Obama to do the right thing in world affairs slipped from 60% pre-speech to 49% post-speech (PEW July 23 2009).

By the end of the Bush administration, relations between the US and the Muslim world reached their lowest point in 60 years. A 2007 poll conducted by World Public Opinion Organization revealed that an average of 79% of respondents in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Indonesia argued that the US sought to ‘weaken and divide the Islamic world’, while a similar percentage maintained that the US wanted ‘control over the oil resources of the Middle East’. The invasion of Iraq created a conundrum for the Sunni’s in the region and empowered the Shiites with Iran leading.

## **Outreach: From Cairo to the Failed Hopes of Iranian Election**

Obama picked Cairo, to send a message to the Muslim world , that “change has (had) come to America” (Obama 2008). But prior to the speech the president met and spoke with middle east allies in an effort to reassure them. The first meeting between the Saudi King and Obama came prior to the Cairo address. The two discussed a wide range of issues that included peace in the middle east as well as Iranian nuclear program (Fox News 2009).

This meeting was a move to shore up U.S. leadership in the region. During the campaign President Obama made it clear that as part of his foreign policy he would repair relations with the Muslims. Riyadh was the president’s first stop to the middle east thus sending a strong message regarding the U.S. relations. The president at Cairo pledged a “New Beginning” with the Middle East. His address at the University was an attempt to begin a new. It resonated the common linkages between the Muslim countries and the U.S. as well as a way to move forward especially with country’s like Iran (Obama June 2009).

The speech had a mixed reaction. Though the European powers welcomed the speech , the U.S. regional allies were skeptical skeptical. But at the same time there was outward praise for the president’s bold initiative. US approval rating in the region had gone up since he assumed the presidency. During his visit with the Saudis, he sought ‘counsel’ from the Saudis. The fact that the visit served Obama’s purpose to build a consensus for his foreign policy, this included his outreach to Iran (Traverns 2009).

The trip was strategic maneuver to lay the foundation of the ‘olive branch strategy’ towards Iran. In a statement President Obama reiterated,

*“I thought it was very important to come to the place where Islam began and to seek his majesty's counsel and to discuss with him many of the issues that we confront here in the Middle East”* (Obama June 3, 2009).

Obama was out to break new policy ground in his Cairo speech. Prior to his address he visited Turkey and Iraq in April and a series of outreach efforts including a New Year video greeting and a student town hall in Istanbul. In Riyadh, the president talked to King Abdullah about a host of thorny problems, from Arab-Israeli peace efforts to Iran's nuclear program. The Saudis have voiced growing concern in private that an Iranian bomb could unleash a nuclear arms race in the region. The surge in oil prices also was on the agenda. Obama and the Saudi King discussed the Yemeni detainees in Guantanamo Bay prisoners well as the closure of the prison. The U.S. has been hesitant to send them home because of Yemen's history of either releasing extremists or allowing them to escape from prison. Instead, the Obama administration had been negotiating with Saudi Arabia and Yemen for months to send them to Saudi terrorist rehabilitation centers (The Telegraph 2009). Obama needed Saudi on multiple fronts especially when it came to Guantanamo.

On July 31, the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saudi Al Faisal, met with Hillary Clinton at the State Department. The meeting took place in the aftermath of her foreign policy address which touched upon "responsibility" of Arab nations to "take steps to improve relations with Israel". The language was meant to balance Obama's emphasis on an Israeli settlement freeze and was a reference to confidence-building measures that Arab states. According to F. Gregory Gause III, "the first thing [the Saudis] think about when it comes to regional politics is the contest for influence with Iran. Everything gets filtered through that lens". On Iran, the Saudis were suspicious of Obama's strategy and his willingness to a deal that could threaten the security of Saudi (Crowley 2009).

Prior to his speech, Obama met face-to-face with PM Netanyahu in May 2009. The conversation revealed around the "common goal of peace". The issue of Iran and the nuclear program was addressed as it concerned both. The Palestinian question and expansion of settlements was also addressed (Obama May 18th 2009). The Israelis were skeptical of Obama's Cairo address on the one hand but were willing to support the president in some measure. The speech was not received well as the speech deviated from



traditional U.S. policy on settlements. Obama called for the “end of building settlements on land claimed by Palestinians” which was a divergence from his predecessors. In his speech he “recognized the state of Palestine”. He further stated the “construction violates(ed) previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop”. While Obama had made similar statements to the Israeli PM, Benjamin Netanyahu, the tone of his rhetoric before an Arab world took on a “special resonance”. This is not to say that the president gave the Palestinians a free pass, he sent a clear message to Palestinian militants to abandon violence. The Arab-Israeli conflict, Obama added, “should no longer...distract ...nations” from other issues plaguing the international community (Obama June 2009; Black and Tran 2009).

However though the official message resonated ‘cooperation’ with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Israel statement that stated

*“The Government of Israel expresses its hope that this important speech in Cairo will indeed lead to a ‘new period of reconciliation’ between the Arab and Moslem world and Israel. We share President Obama's hope that the American effort heralds the beginning of a new era that will bring about an end to the conflict and lead to Arab recognition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, living in peace and security in the Middle East. Israel is committed to peace and will make every effort to expand the circle of peace while protecting its interests, especially its national security”* (Israel Government 4th June 2009).

In the aftermath of the Cairo address, the president reiterated the tenants of the address as well as the security in the region through a phone conversation with Netanyahu (The White House, June 8th 2009) .

Israeli President Shimon Peres welcomed the address, calling Obama's words “wise and courageous and saying the president called for hard work on the part of all the sides involved with the advance of the peace process in the Middle East.” Chief

Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erakat applauded Obama's commitment to the creation of a two-state solution. "This was a very important speech, in which President Obama reinforced the message that ending the occupation and establishing a viable and independent Palestinian state was in the mutual interest of Palestinians, Israelis and indeed the entire world. Progress towards peace hinges on both parties implementing their obligations under existing agreements". For Nabil Abu Rudeineh, adviser of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the address was "very encouraging, and this is a new start and different American policy." "This kind of change is very important for the whole region," (CNN June 4 2009).

Obama's declaration, "It is time for these settlements to stop" signaled a new emphasis in America's approach to the problem however it infuriated Israeli leadership but was applauded by the Arab states. However, Obama never enforced real consequences which was seen by the Arabs as a confirmation of that the "US treats Israel with kid gloves" (Obama June 4th 2009 ; Crowley 2015).

During the negotiations with the P5 as well as the imposition of sanctions on Iran multilaterally as well as unilaterally, the Obama administration was on a track to further strengthened ties with regional countries especially with Israel and Saudi Arabia. The president had a number of phone conversations with Netanyahu on issues that spanned on security dynamics in the region. This included the Gaza as well as Iran and the commitment shared by both nations of curbing the nuclear program. There was a conversation heron the President congratulated the PM and his party's victory in the elections (2009). In November 2009 the two leaders met in an effort to shore up relations and calm fears (The White House April 1st 2009, Obama November 2009)

In a further attempt to display U.S. support for the regional allies, in 2010, the administration pushed for arms sales with Saudi worth \$60 billion. This was an effort geared towards a counter attack against Iran. There were many in Congress that were apprehensive of the magnitude and scale of the agreement as it pertained to regional stability (Sugrue 2010). Obama also called upon the regional allies in an effort to get

Russia and China on board with UN sanctions. Saudi's in fact offered to procure the S-300 that was meant to be sold to Iran, in an effort to get Russia onboard with sanctions (Parsi 2012b). In the aftermath of the passage of UN sanctions, the president met with King Abdullah at the White House. The timing of the meeting was an important aspect as the two sides discussed the two state solution as well as Iran. This was especially true as the UN sanctions on Iran (Obama June 29th 2010). Obama also met with Netanyahu as part of their ongoing dialogue. The subject was was on a wide range of issues regarding the middle east but focussed mainly on Iran and the multilateral as well as unilateral sanctions. The two reiterated the "bond" between the two countries (Obama July 6th 2010).

While the President and his team were in the midst of negotiating UN sanctions , the debate extended to arm sales to the middle east allies. In March 2010, the Obama administration announced that it would provide "\$205 million in defense assistance to Israel for the purchase of up to ten Iron Dome batteries". This was part of Defense authorization bill for FY2011. The amount was authorized by the House which would have to be authorized by the Senate. The House also took the lead and asserted itself in passing United States-Israel Rocket and Missile Defense Cooperation and Support Act. The bill authorized "the administration to provide assistance to the Government of Israel for the procurement, maintenance and sustainment of the Iron Dome Short Range Artillery Rocket Defense System for purposes of intercepting short-range rockets, missiles, and mortars launched against Israel". Thus, Congress took the initiative in certain cases to ensure the protection of U.S. allies. The initiatives had more to do with the war in Gaza than Iran, however nevertheless the attempt was to signal that Washington had not abandoned its ally (Defense Authorization FY2011).

### **The Arab Spring and U.S. Allies**

The hope that was generated at the time of the election and thereafter in his speech at Cairo to improve relations with the Muslim world were dashed. The Arab Spring, the democratic uprising in the region worried the monarchies many of whom

were longtime U.S. allies. The movement began in 2010 in Tunisia and spread throughout the region. At first, President Obama strategically avoided outward support for the movement as he feared it would alienate important U.S. allies. In addition to this he wanted to avoid being charged with interference, regime change, ideas associated with his predecessor. However, as the movement continued and was met with violent crackdown, Obama was forced to speak out in favor of democratic values and in favor of the movement. Obama had to tread lightly so as to not upset the balance in the region and the maintain the status quo. Riyadh's response was considered counter revolutionary, especially in Bahrain and Yemen. The Arab Spring changed regional dynamics, especially for those autocracies allied with the US with specific reference to Egypt and Libya. There was a fear that Saudi monarchy was next. During the Arab Spring, Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy supported a number of liberal groups in the pursuit of democracy. In a memorandum dated August 2010, the memo titled "Political Reform in the Middle East and Africa" it stated that the administration would be undermined if it was perceived as backing repressive regimes. Therefore, the president had to be "on the right side of history". The situation during the movement became tenuous when in Egypt and then in Libya, the administration's quick abandonment of President Mubarak raised concerns in the region as well as the overthrow of Qaddafi. Israel and pro-West Arab leaders started to question the reliability of the U.S. as an ally. In order to display non-interference, Obama displayed support and a willingness to work with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in spite of their anti-Israeli rhetoric and its authoritarian policies in Egypt. The Administration continued to view them as a valuable partner in the region as they were democratically elected (Eligur 2014).

The conundrums created in Libya and Egypt forced the Administration to think and re-think their policy towards Syria. The president was careful when it came to Syria. The Assad regime also had close ties with the Ayatollah's therefore the Obama followed a cautious and to some extent acquiesced in his policy towards Syria. Therefore, negotiating with Iran created a problem for Obama's actions in Syria. During the Arab Spring, the Israelis were pessimistic and fearful that Iran would take advantage of the

unrest. With Islamist parties and groups on the rise, the skepticism regarding the Arab Spring increased. This was especially in Egypt and the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood. Israel had always been skeptical of the Alawite regime in Syria, the Assad regime had shown both restraint and predictability and avoided direct confrontations with Israel. The potential collapse of Syria could create a power vacuum and further instability and unpredictability in the region that threatened the security of Israel. As the crisis escalated, the Israelis condemned the regime. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Israel was vigilant about the political evolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and later on Libya (Berti 2013).

When Arab Spring spread to Yemen, it further extended the proxy wars between Iran and Saudi. The Saudis were determined to quell the democratization movement, the Saudi-influenced Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) negotiated a power-sharing deal between the Saleh regime and the opposition forces. However this overlooked the powerful political groups with wide grassroots support, such as the Houthis who had the support of Iran (Selim 2013). In May 2011, Netanyahu and Obama met after the AIPAC conference. In their discussions, the president attempted to quell the fears of Netanyahu and boost relations with its ally (Obama May 20th 2011). There was an additional reason for the meeting regarding an Israeli attack on Iran which would embroil the U.S. one that Obama wanted to avoid .

In 2011, there was a great deal of fear within the administration concerning an Israel attack on Iran against the nuclear program. This created a great deal of apprehension within the Obama White House. Washington's lack of support for a military strike was due to internal constraints - which included its overextension in Afghanistan , Iraq, as well as its economic problems together with a lack of appetite with the U.S. to further embroil the country in the region. The administration also felt it was being manipulated by the leadership in Israel. This was especially true with Netanyahu's threats of a military strike before the 2012 U.S. Presidential Elections. The fear of the U.S. was

entrapment (Sobelman 2018). Though Netanyahu was in favor of sanctions, he was of the opinion that sanctions and diplomacy would take time to be effective (Burns 2019).

In addition to these developments, the administration agreed to the \$29 billion arms sale to Saudi which included F-15 fighter jets. The sale took place after months of delay and negotiation. According to Andrew Shapiro the Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, the “\$29.4 billion called for the production of up to 84 new F-15SA aircraft and the modernization of 70 current F-15s, along with munitions, spare parts, training, maintenance and logistics”. The timing of the announcement for the deal was as a result of the rising regional tensions over Iran’s nuclear program, the sale therefore was geared towards reassuring Riyadh (CNN 30 Dec 2011). In terms of military training, the U.S. also allotted as part of FY2013 \$10,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance funding for Saudi Arabia. In the recent past, Congress had prohibited IMET and other foreign assistance to Saudi but also offered waivers. The leadership in Saudi was critical of Congress’s lack of support when it came to military sales and foreign assistance (Blanchard June 19 2011 CRS Report). In October 2011, Tom Donilon visited the king in an effort to shore up support as well as praised the King and the GCC for their statement calling an end to the violence in Syria. The two also addressed (The White House October 01 2011).

The year 2012 signaled the re-election campaign for the president. However there was still a great deal the president had to do in an effort to reassure the allies. Netanyahu and Obama met in the aftermath of the AIPAC conference in 2012. The meeting was especially important given the changing dynamics in the region. The two reiterated the ‘special bond’(Obama March 5th 2012).

As part of the president’s reassurance campaign, he had to lend support to the Saudis against the Houthis in Yemen. In 2012, as part of the expansion in military operations in Yemen, the Obama Administration also provided Yemen with a total of US\$346 million in military and economic assistance, which is the largest in the history of U.S foreign aid. The U.S conducted drone attacks and special operations forces on the

ground were expanded, the president also acknowledged that the U.S. military was actively engaged inside Yemen. In Bahrain like in Yemen, the Obama administration supported its ally. Though the president was preferred a compromise between the Sunni ruling family and the Shiite majority. For the U.S., there were other strategic concerns in negotiating a compromise; protection of the U.S. naval air base as well as the pressure from Saudi (Selim 2013). Though the Arab Spring had little to do with negotiations with Iran, they were attempts by the administration to heal the growing rift with their allies.

The fears of the regional allies were further exacerbated by Congress. Many of the resolutions put forth by Congress addressed the region however it was through the hearings that the fears of members of Congress vis-a-vis regional allies were displayed. In his statement to Congress, Thomas Pickering made the case for the administration's diplomatic overtures towards Iran. He also denounced the "use of a military force" either by the U.S. or Israel in an effort to curtail the nuclear program. As it would be difficult to detect the sites. He also addressed the idea of regime change, which was a "farfetched" option. Therefore, sanctions were a viable diplomatic solution. General Cartwright former Vice Chairman of JCS addressed Iran's nexus with terrorist organization. As well as Tehran's active role in the region. Karim Sadjadpour of the Carnegie Institute advocated for coercive diplomacy along with dialogue that could slowdown the nuclear program. During the hearings, the issue of regional proliferation was addressed this pertained to Turkey, Saudi, Egypt, UAE and others. In addition, the the 123 Agreement signed with the UAE was also addressed. Though regional assurance were an important facet of U.S. Middle East policy treading lightly was the crux of the argument. Questions were raised as to whether Article V under NATO should apply to them. This was especially true with Israel and Saudi as well as fears were raised about Saudi's nuclear program (CHRG March 2012).

The House Foreign Affairs, was far more proactive in the concerns raised about Iran. This included the sanctioning of Iran as well as Tehran's relations with Syria. The hearings addressed H.R. 3783, "a comprehensive strategy to counter Iran's growing

presence and hostile activity in the Western Hemisphere” . There was a fear among members in Congress that the administration had not addressed Iran creating avenues with leaders in the Western Hemisphere (CHRG March 1 2012).

### **Moving Toward the Interim Agreement: Obama, Regional Allies and Iran**

The year 2013 brought in new leadership as well as a renewal in leadership. In January 2013, Barack Obama was sworn in as President for a second term . In Israel Benjamin Netanyahu won a majority of seats in the Knesset. A mid-May 2013 public opinion poll revealed negative approval ratings for Netanyahu (Zanotti 2016). In the aftermath of the elections, Obama congratulated the PM and his party for their victory as well as working with the new government (Obama Jan 28th 2013).

On March 21st 2013 Obama made his third visit to Israel in effort to calm the fears of the political establishment as well as the people. The speech was based on US-Israel “stand together”. He raised the issue of Iran and reiterated the U.S. position on a nuclear Iran (Obama March 2013). Talks between the two focussed on Iran, Syria and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The president also travelled to Ramallah to meet Palestinian leaders. As part of his trip he visited the Iron Dome (the mobile missile defense unit). In part, the trip was aimed at recalibrating the relationship between the two leaders at the start of their second terms and building trust on both sides. The White House stated it was a “chance to connect with the Israeli people”, who were distrustful of Obama. A poll published by the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* found that “only 10% of Israelis had a favorable attitude towards Obama, with 17% defining their attitude towards the U.S. president as hateful”. As part of his overture, Obama delivered a keynote address to Israeli university students. From Israel he went on to meet Abbas, Palestinian President (Sherwood 2013). According to the CNN poll, there was a 49% - 49% split on whether the U.S. should support Israel if it unilaterally attacked Iranian facilities (Yellin and Cohen 2013).



The visit aimed to repair the trust deficit that existed between the two countries as a result of the leadership. According to Dennis Ross the president's 'go-to man' on Iran , these speeches should have been given in 2009 in the same way Obama addressed the muslim community. The trip was considered successful as polls showed an increased trust in Obama. This was especially important in the negotiations with Iran (Ross 2015).

In April 2013, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, visited the Middle East and announced that the U.S. had reached a \$10 billion arms sales agreement with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The aim of the agreement was to enhance the "country's respective deterrent against Iran". As part of the deal, the U.S. would sell the V-22 Osprey (the first time a foreign country would be permitted to purchase the advanced tilt-rotor aircraft) to Israel. U.S. officials, stated that the sale of the Osprey displayed Washington's commitment to Tel Aviv's QME (Sharp 2014).

The June 2013 election of Hassan Rouhani brought hope to the flailing negotiation process. The P5+1 and Iran were emboldened to reach a agreement . After a number of rounds of negotiations, they reached an interim nuclear agreement. The agreement was met with disappointment by the Israelis. According to the White House sources, the Israelis were briefed on the agreement. Netanyahu called the deal "a historic mistake"(Dorell, Madhani and Jackson 2013). In an effort to reaffirm U.S. support, the Secretary of Defense undertook a visit to Israel in an effort to reaffirm the U.S. relations. During the visit to the region, Carter discussed Iran and Syria two issues that were of mutual importance . He stated that "protecting America meant protecting Israel" (Pellerin 2013).

Throughout September, October, and November while negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran were ongoing, the president was in constant contact with Netanyahu. In September 2013, the two sides met and discussed the situation in Iran as well as Syria. Obama also reiterated time and again U.S. commitment to preventing a nuclear Iran. The president spoke of "cooperation and coordination" with respect to Iran. In an effort to Calm the fears of the PM, he kept him up to date with the negotiations (White House

September 30th 2013; White House October 28th 2013; White House November 8th 2013).

Prior to the interim deal being struck, Bibi met with Secretary of State and reiterated his concerns over the deal. According to the U.S. delegation, the Israeli got everything they wanted. The political establishment in Israel was skeptical of Rouhani and about a genuine shift in Iranian policies. But some Israelis saw Rouhani as even more dangerous than Ahmadinejad because his style and positions could split the international community. The adage “the devil you do know vs the devil you don’t know” was the reasoning. Ahmadinejad was more of outward confrontation while Rouhani willingness to negotiate. Netanyahu stated that the deal endangered Israel and asserted that “Israel has the right and the obligation to defend itself.” These concerns extended to Netanyahu’s cabinet which included Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon. Shimon Peres tried to calm the fears of the Israeli establishment as well as the people stating that deal was temporary and should be judged on the outcome. An opinion poll conducted in the aftermath of the interim agreement displayed that the public sided with the establishment and were skeptical of the agreement (Kaye and Martini 2015).

Dennis Ross, met with the PM on a number of occasions, according to Ross, these meetings were more like members of the administration attempting to coddle the PM. He also met with the PM after he spoke to President Obama and Kerry regarding the JPA that took the Israelis by surprise. Iran team was also briefed by Rice who viewed US-Israel relations in terms of competition and non-collaborative. Though Kerry made attempts at building trust with the Israel they fell short as Netanyahu was uncompromising. Tom Donilon was considered a trustworthy ally of Netanyahu. The gap between the leaders continued to grow as the attempts were made by the P5 to reach an agreement (Ross 2015).

The Saudis though did not outwardly criticize the agreement to the same extent as the Israelis, nevertheless saw the move as the U.S. ‘offshore balancing’. The U.S. rebalancing towards the Asia Pacific was a sign of it moving away from the Middle East

at a crucial time. This together with the withdrawal from Iraq and the plans to withdraw from the Afghanistan gave the allies in the region something to worry about especially pertaining to US security in the region (Kaye and Martini 2015).

The official statement released stated that “the Kingdom views(ed) the agreement as a primary step towards a comprehensive solution to the Iranian nuclear program, as long as good intentions are provided”. The statement went on to state that “more important steps leading to a guarantee of the right for all countries in the region to peacefully use nuclear energy”. Though the statement seemed to support the P5 and the U.S. strategy, it also signaled that Washington would have to play an important role in regional security in terms of military agreements etc. In addition to the nuclear aspects , there were the other concerns such as the waving off certain sanctions would empower the Shias in the region (Katzman and Kerr 2013).

### **From JPA to JCPOA: Obama Steps Up the Campaign for a Comprehensive Agreement**

The interim agreement was not the only factor that created schism between the two leaders, the Palestinian peace process and Obama’s call for a freeze on settlement further exerted the situation (Booth 2014).

The Netanyahu government blamed Obama’s inner circle on the deal, including Ben Rhodes, Dennis McDonough and Valarie Jarrett who were against military conflict. (Parsi 2017). However, Israel’s security establishment were not eager for a military confrontation, particularly one that did not have the support of the U.S., Israel’s threats of military action were not a mere bluff, they had previously considered the option of a military strike in the past. Netanyahu attempted to usurp control of the situation by lobbying Congress against the agreement as well as the international community but failed to do so (Fiske 23 February 2014). However, in spite of the assurances by members of the administration as well as Democrats in Congress who supported the agreement, the Israelis were skeptical. The delays in reaching the comprehensive

agreement added to the growing skepticism in spite of the IAEA's reports that stated Iran adhered to the interim agreement (Kaye and Martini 2015). Throughout 2014, it was not only members of the administration that attempted to quell the fears of the Israeli political establishment, it was Obama himself that made multiple phone calls to Netanyahu in an effort to bring him on board. In March a bilateral meeting was held. During the meeting, Obama laid out the areas of discussion, Iran being an important area. This was especially true as the P5 moved towards negotiating a comprehensive agreement (Obama March 3rd 2014).

However, the Gaza War and the growing divergences on dealing with the crisis added to the tension in the relations. The Iron Dome funded by the U.S. was strategically important in the Gaza War. While the P5 were still in the process of negotiating the final deal, Congress took steps to ensure the security of Israel, thus sending Obama a strong message. This was in the form of H.R938 and S. 462. On March 5, 2014, the House passed H.R. 938, the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014. The Act declared "that Israel was a major strategic partner of the U.S", it also extended "the authorization for the War Reserves Stock Allies-Israel (WRSA-I) program through FY2015, authorized annual funding for a U.S.-based Joint Energy Research Center, authorized \$3 million to be spent on research pilot programs between Israel and the Department of Homeland Security, and it called for the administration to submit biennial reports on maintaining Israel's QME" (Sharp April 2014). The fact-sheet of the bilateral relationship addressed defense cooperation, counterterrorism and other facets. In matters pertaining to defense cooperation this included; Foreign Military Sales (FMS) approximating at \$97 billion (The White House March 28th 2014).

In May 2014, the president met with King Abdullah of Saudi, this was after the interim agreement came into being and negotiations over a comprehensive agreement had begun. The topic of discussion revolved around regional security including Iran and Syria. The two sides agreed on common interests regarding Iran. The two sides addressed Iran's regional destabilizing activities this was especially true in Syria. This was an

important meeting for the president as it was an opportunity for the administration to clarify its stand in negotiating with Iran. The conversation also revolved around the threat from the IS. They also discussed the visit of Secretary Kerry's as part of the GCC Summit (The White House May 28th 2014).

In June 2014, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearing on the regional implication of a nuclear deal with Iran. The timing was important given that the Interim agreement was in place and the P5 were negotiating a comprehensive agreement. For Robert Menendez the Chairman, an agreement that dismantled Iran's entire nuclear program as well as LEU and terminated the research and development was considered a good deal. The hearing was held as there was a great deal of concern among U.S. regional allies. However, Sen. Bob Crocker stated that even if the deal addressed all facets of Iran's nuclear program he was skeptical about the Iran's state sponsor of terrorism. Dennis Ross who was one of president's advisors in dealing with Iran was skeptical (in 2014) about reaching an agreement and stated that dealing with Iran is akin to an "existential struggle". A similar was shared by Israeli leadership. Ross encouraged a contingency plan as well as repeated meetings with the Saudis in an effort to quell their fears. It was also an attempt to reassure the leadership in Israel. For Scott Modell (CSIS) the conundrum was the manner in which Iran evaded sanctions, transportation networks, intelligence networks and threat networks. The doubts within the GCC were also raised. There was concern regarding Iran's involvement in Syria and Iraq as well. Dr Frederick Kagan of the American Enterprise was clear that any deal negotiated with Iran should address their regional nefarious activities (CHRG June 2014)

The year 2015 began differently for both allies and the U.S. On the one hand for Saudi it was greeted with a presidential visit to Riyadh in the aftermath of King Abdullah's death. He was accompanied by prominent Republican officials, including former Secretaries of State James Baker and Condoleezza Rice. The discussion centered around the Islamic State and the coalition of nations fighting the Islamic radicals (Obama 2015). On the other hand, for Israel it began with Congress and Netanyahu asserting

power over the president. The Republican-controlled Congress flexed its muscles when it came to the negotiating with Iran whose deadlines had been postponed several times in an effort to reach an agreement. With the new Congress in place, there was an aura of the 'return of congressional government' versus the presidential dominance. Under the leadership of Speaker Boehner, the Republicans empowered by the numbers in Congress invited PM Netanyahu to address the joint session in Congress regarding Israel's fears of a nuclear agreement with Iran. In doing so, Congress took the lead over the President's in inviting Netanyahu. In matters pertaining to domestic policy, the Republicans were able to stall many of the programs however their key failure had been repealing healthcare. In foreign policy they were limited in their success in pushing the President, therefore this maneuver was one of the ways in which Republicans were able to surpass the Democrats.

The already fractured relations between the leaders reached new levels. There were visible snubs that emanated from the White House. The speech to Congress was directly aimed at the American people whose voice counted and at the president who many thought was powerless given his lame-duck status and the loss of his party in Congress. Congressional Republicans were accused of an ambush engineered by Speaker John Boehner and Ron Dermer Israeli Ambassador to Washington. From the Israeli point of view, Netanyahu stood by his speech as a warning, but from a presidential dominance perspective, Obama was upstaged by not only Congress but from outside forces - Israeli PM Netanyahu (McGreal 2015).

For the administration and its P5 partners, the agreement was sound and did not require "a ban on enrichment", rather it prevented Iran from rapid nuclear breakout capability. According to the deal, there would be a significant reduction in Iran's current enrichment capacity, as well as the plutonium production and threat at the Arak reactor. It incorporated far-reaching monitoring arrangements as well. Some prominent Israeli experts share this view, as do all the governments of America's P5+1 partners. But the majority of Israeli officials and a number of members of Congress demanded the

“elimination of key elements of Iran’s nuclear program” however Obama and members of the Administration that supported the agreement countered the demands as they were unnecessary for a sound agreement (Einhorn March 2014)

Obama’s assertiveness (to the Netanyahu’s divisive speech), came with the President’s delayed congratulatory message to PM Netanyahu on his electoral victory. Though the White House down played it, the administration was convinced the PM was pitting Democrats against Republicans , thus furthering the partisan war. Obama’s response to Netanyahu’s address, was simple yet calculated. He pointed out the similarities in the briefs of both leaders however on the “core issue”, Obama stated that the PM did not provide any “viable solutions” (C-Span 2015).

The relations between the two leaders had reached one of the lowest points. The prolonged Iran negotiations together with the collapse of the US-sponsored Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in April damaged relations with Washington and exposed the lack of influence wielded by Kerry. This was coupled with the bombing of Gaza. There was a reshuffling within the Obama White House that waist part geared towards healing the rift. Rob Malley, who had been a senior advisor at the National Security Council, was made special assistant to the President and White House coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf Region. He replaced Phil Gordon (Lewis and Yuhas 2015).

As tensions were running high, members of the administration like Kerry attempted to diffuse the situation by statin the relations between the two countries was “unshakable”. It was Kerry that attempted to bring about a thaw in the relations. Kerry held a meeting with the Israeli ambassador in an effort to reassure them of US commitment (Jaffe 2015). In April, when the P5+1 announced the framework of the deal, the president spoke to Netanyahu. During the conversation on board Air Force One, the president emphasized that the framework represented progress towards “a lasting, comprehensive solution that cuts off all of Iran’s pathways to a bomb” as well as there was a strong process of monitoring and verification (The White House April 2nd 2015).

When it came to Saudi and the GCC allies, the administration led the 2015 GCC Summit at Camp David in an effort to garner support for the nuclear agreement which was in the final stages of negotiations. Prior to the Summit, King Salman informed the president and conveyed his apologies for his absence at the Summit. The two leaders the importance of the P5+1 negotiations (The White House May 11th. 2015). However though the official report was that the relations were cordiale, the underlining tension could be seen as a result of the King's absence.

The absence of the Saudis was most notable given their reactions to U.S. negotiations with Iran. It was a strategic message to the administration that Saudi and its leadership were unhappy. The venue for the Summit was carefully chosen as a sign of signaling peace. It was during the Carter and later Clinton administrations that U.S. were successful in bring about peace accord between the Israelis and the Palestinians as well as the Egyptians. During the 2015 Summit, the president promised "additional military aid to its Gulf allies". This was aimed at "combating cyberattacks, missile strikes and maritime threats from Iran". However, there was a gap, the president stopped short of providing the allies with a 'defense pact' much like that of Article V of NATO the charter that stated - 'an attack against them would mean the U.S. would come to their defense'. This troubled the allies who had hoped for such a pact. Additionally, the GCC allies raised their concerns over lifting the oil sanctions which would allow Iran to create further problems in the region especially in Yemen which was a major concern for the Saudis. It was not only Obama that made efforts to persuade the leaders, members of his cabinet also lobbied to alter the view of the GCC leaders. This included, Secretary of State John Kerry Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz both of whom had played an important role in the rallying for a deal. From the administration's point of view, the deal would further secure the middle East rather than have a nuclear Middle East that is already volatile. Members of the administration like Ben Rhodes deputy NSC adviser down played the idea of a regional arms race as a result of the deal (Davis and Sanger 2015).



Though it was not a necessity, the administration had to get the GCC allies on board with deal as they would require support in terms of being part of the U.S. alliance, it was also an attempt to satisfy Congress as well. No hearing on Iran could have been complete had it not been for the interjection of regional security. Therefore, for members of Congress to support the deal it was necessary for the Obama administration to get the GCC allies on board. The Secretary of State furthered Obama's promise by promoting "a new security understanding" with the GCC. Though the gulf countries were dissatisfied with Obama, it was through the Summit that President Obama attempted to display 'strategic partnership' with GCC. It was mostly the negative aspects that gained traction in the the media when it came to the GCC Summit. However, the pledge for a 'strategic partnership' encompassed a host of issues that the media reports barely scratched. As part of the joint statement, the two sides re-affirmed interest in de-escalating the regional crisis. The U.S. and GCC member states also decided to set up a senior working group to pursue the development of rapid response capabilities, taking into account the Arab League's concept of a "unified Arab force," to mount or contribute to counter-terrorism activities, peacekeeping and stabilization operations in the region. The U.S. and GCC member states also affirmed their strong support for the efforts of the P5+1 to reach a deal with Iran by June 30, 2015, that would verifiably ensure that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon, noting that such a deal would represent a significant contribution to regional security. The leaders also held in-depth discussions on the most pressing conflicts in the region and steps they decided should be taken to help resolve them (Maclean and McDowall May 12, 2015 Reuters) .

The annex of the U.S.-GCC Camp David Joint Statement addressed specific areas of cooperation. This included the "ballistic missile program, military exercises and training, arms transfers, maritime security and counter terrorism". The ballistic missiles defense; the U.S. would help conduct a "study of GCC ballistic missile defense architecture and offered technical assistance in the development of a GCC-wide Ballistic Missile Early Warning System". The U.S. would also send "a military team to GCC capitals to discuss and decide on ways to increase the frequency of Special Operations

Forces counter-terrorism cooperation and training”. The two sides would work together to set up “Foreign Military Sales procurement office to process GCC-wide sales, streamline third-party transfers, and explore ways the U.S. could accelerate the acquisition and fielding of key capabilities”. Washington was also committed to provide “additional training and technical assistance for coastal security, protection of offshore infrastructure, and counter-smuggling”. In matters pertaining to countering terrorism activities like IS, the discussion focussed on setting up “a second U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum Working Group on Counter-terrorism and Border Security to follow up on previous efforts to cooperate on border security”. The aim was “countering the financing of terrorism cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection”(White House , May 14 2015).

An important section of the Annex dealt with the Iran and the P5+1 nuclear negotiations. The Joint Statement “reflected a more sophisticated approach” to the negotiation process rather than “the almost blanket condemnation that some in the Gulf had previously made”. However, it failed to address the issue of how both sides would respond if no agreement was reached. It also failed to address the adequacy of the agreement with respect to Arab Gulf states and the manner in which the U.S. and Arab Gulf states would consult to determine whether Iran honored and implemented the agreement over time. It also ignored the growing concern in the GCC that if an agreement with Iran “preserves Iran’s technology base and nuclear fuel cycle”, the GCC states must have their own nuclear power and fuel cycle. It is also important to note, that the GCC showed it was scarcely united on how to deal with Iran, just as it has divided to some extent over virtually every major security issue (White House, May 14 2015).

The focus of the Summit rather than being on the issues at hand, focussed on the absence of heads of state among the GCC. The Summit was necessity given the trust deficit on both sides. For Obama, it gave him the opportunity to listen far more carefully to U.S. allies and reassure them far more clearly. In an effort to display assurances, a series of major security cooperative measures were untaken. These included “containing

and deterring Iran, deploying U.S. special forces and mine units to the Gulf, making the GCC states partners in its Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Qatar, sharply increasing the number of multilateral military exercises – especially with the U.S. 5th Fleet – and helping the GCC states make major improvements in their deterrence and defense capabilities” (Cordesman 2015).

The negotiations with Iran together with other international issues such as the war against IS took up much of the president’s time and political capital. In a survey conducted by PEW, the words that described the President were ‘good’ (35%) incompetent (33%) and intelligent (21%) were among the highest (PEW Jan 20th 2015). On the other hand, the Republican led Congress drew harsh views. Just 23% of Americans stated congressional Republicans “are keeping the promises they made”, while 65% say “they are not”. (PEW May 21 2015).

While the administration attempted to reassure the ambivalent allies, negotiations continued despite the several extensions. One of the aims of the deal was to secure the region from a nuclear arms race as well as lower regional tensions. The postponements came under suspicion from Congress as well as the regional community. In an effort to reassure the region, the Iranians attempted reach out to the region, Javed Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister made a visit to the GCC states in an effort to calm regional fears. The Iranians met with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud bin Faysal Al Said. It was not only the GCC allies that were ambivalent about the negotiations, Israel condemned the extensions. The idea of “No deal is better than a bad deal” plagued them, it was a statement that was detested by Israeli political establishment. The deal that Iran was pushing for allowed them to enrich uranium the leadership supported the policy of dismantling the Iranian nuclear program (Al Jazeera 25th Nov 2014.) Throughout the duration of the interim agreement, the IAEA continued to monitor Iran’s nuclear program. The November IAEA Report stated that the Iran had not enriched uranium above 5% at declared facilities (IAEA 2014).

Minister of Intelligence and Strategic Affairs Yuval Steinitz in an interview with Israeli Daily stated, Israel was 'uneasy' about the definition of the objectives of the agreement's vis-a-vis the breakout. Israel was also concerned that the agreement could allow Iran to engage in research and development involving advanced centrifuges. Sanction relief was an additional factor together with monitoring and verification techniques (Lappin 2014).

### **The JCPOA and the Regional Response**

On July 14th 2015, the P5+1 together with Iran were able to finalize the agreement. However, in order for the deal to be implemented Iran was to adhere to certain criteria such reduction in centrifuges, as well as enrichment of uranium to name a few aspects of comprehensive agreement. The deal was finally implemented on 16th January 2016 as Iran adhered to number of provisions regarding the Arak Heavy Water Research Reactor, enrichment capability, research and development regarding centrifuges, Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, the Additional Protocol and the manufacture of centrifuges (Williams 2015). The reality of the deal, plagued the regional allies and raised questions as to the lengths the president was willing to go to in an effort to maintain the deal. The Saudis feared a rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran would or could downgrade their position with the US. The deal also meant a recognition of Iran's nuclear program and by the terms of the NPT was allowed to retain their civilian nuclear program.

Prior to the deal being finalized, the members of the administration, informed allies in the region. The president made personal phone calls to Netanyahu and the Saudi King to inform them about the deal.

The official Saudi Arabian news agency issued a positive, towed a positive but cautious line in response to the announcement of the agreement. The wording was similar to the remarks by King Salman to President Obama in the telephone call initiated by the President after the agreement was signed: "Saudi Arabia supports any agreement that

guarantees preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.” The newspaper *a-Sharq al-Awsat*, was more critical of the agreement, stating that the “Iran Nuclear Deal opens the gates of evil in the Middle East”. Furthermore, though the Saudi leadership displayed support for the agreement, there was a great deal of uncertainty and dissatisfaction (Guzansky 2015).

In the aftermath, President Obama and King Salman met at the White House in the hope to put to rest any misgivings between the two, strengthen ties, as well as to discuss the battle and against IS. The visit was his first since ascending the throne in January 2015. The Saudi foreign minister, released a statement that was meant to reassure the Saudi people as well as the gulf allies. Obama and Salman discussed the potential fast-tracking of American military technology and weapons systems to Saudi Arabia, as well as discussed a “new strategic partnership” between the two countries. The discussion included the sale “two frigates based on a coastal warship that Lockheed Martin Corp was building for the U.S. Navy, the deal was valued at over \$1 billion”. The sale would be the “cornerstone of a long-delayed multibillion-dollar modernization of the Royal Saudi Navy’s Gulf-patrolling eastern fleet” (Torbati and Edwards 2015).

The members of the administration also lobbied in favor of the deal when it came to the international allies. At the beginning of August 2015, in an effort to calm the allies, John Kerry met with the GCC. The daylong summit was an effort by the administration to explain the tenants of the deal to the regional powers together with addressing the fear of extending Iranian influence in the region. Kerry indicated the U.S. would comply with “many of the requests”. He specifically cited U.S. plans “to bolster the Arab Gulf states’ missile-defense systems and to conduct more joint-military exercises aimed at strengthening maritime security, cybersecurity and special forces capabilities” (Solomon and Lee 2015). The GCC also highlighted the escalation of Iran’s, aggressive behavior since the inking of the deal. Arab Gulf states have been trying to adjust to these major changes in regional politics and security by form of strengthening regional alliances.

Furthermore, they have been diversifying their extra-regional alliances by reaching out to Russia and China as well as Israel.

PM Netanyahu outright denounced the deal. He had exhausted all his chances of changing the administration's mind over the deal. Therefore, he turned to AIPAC and Congress in an effort to block the deal. Sen Tom Cotton the hawk on the Hill, met with Netanyahu on his visit to Israel. Cotton like Netanyahu supported the idea that the deal will only allow Iran to develop its nuclear program. The deal included waiver of sanctions in the absence would only add to regional problems. Cotton had always been the fiercest critic of the deal (Hattem 2015). Netanyahu did not only have Republicans on his side but Democrats as well. But this had more to do with their voter base in their constituencies. This was especially true of Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) (Welsh 2015) Netanyahu used Jewish groups to do his bidding against the deal for him (Reuters 2015a). Through AIPAC, Netanyahu and the Republicans that opposed the deal were able to wrangle the administration.

Congress had little power over the deal. However Obama made it clear that he would veto any attempt by Congress to assert itself with the nuclear deal. After the president's announcement, Netanyahu called the deal a "colossal mistake". There were some within Israel that believed he went too far in his criticism of the deal. With Netanyahu's constant attacks on the U.S. policy, the foreign minister stated that it was one of the reasons behind Washington's closing off on Israel. Within the Israeli establishment there was criticism from senior opposition figures, including the Isaac Herzog, Shelly Yachimovich from the Zionist Union, who not only opposed the deal but criticized Netanyahu's alienation of Obama's White House. Yachimovich stated that "Netanyahu should immediately cease and desist from confronting the Americans". The Yossi Melman of the Jerusalem Post, stated that "Israel exaggerated the Iranian threat and portrayed it in monstrous proportions". As former ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer was 'dumbfounded' that Israel was against the deal (Beaumont 2015).

There were surveillance experts and members of the Mossad that had a different opinion. Efraim Halevy (former head of Mossad) argued that “the agreement blocked the road to Iranian nuclear military capabilities for at least a decade.” Many of the Israeli security analysts praised the deal that delayed the nuclear weapons threat for ten to fifteen years. In their view, it was a better outcome for Israel security establishment. Israel’s Atomic Energy Commission, endorsed the JCPOA, as the inspection measures restrictions on enrichment for both plutonium and uranium were adequate to prevent Iran’s ability to produce a nuclear bomb (Kaye and Martini 2015). Therefore, there was a split within the Israeli establishment. The primary difference within the Israeli establishment was that security elites were more inclined than the political leaders to support the deal. The long term benefits outweighed the short term but the short term benefits are required for political expediency (Curtsey 2015)

### **The Aftermath of the JCPOA**

With the failure of Republicans to thwart the deal and the triumph of Democrats to save the deal, the regional allies though opposed to the deal would have to fall in line. In an effort to reassure the allies, Obama and Netanyahu spoke “on several occasions” since the Israeli his address to Congress in March (Gass 2015). In September 2015, it was announced that PM Netanyahu would be meeting Obama in the fall. During his November visit to the White House, attempts were made by both sides to repair the damage in the relations between the two as well as with the Democratic Party and liberal Jewish groups. The topics addressed during the meeting included Obama’s commitment to the two-state solution and the military aid package. Being Washington’s important Middle East ally, it sought a record \$5 billion a year, according to U.S. congressional sources. In an effort to win-over Netanyahu, Obama also condemned the Palestinians attacks. In addition to this, the defense pact was a bitter negotiation, at the time negotiations, the U.S. granted \$3.1 billion annually but Netanyahu negotiated for \$5 billion per year for the next package and a total of \$50 billion over a decade. The meeting

lasted for two hours, the tone was conciliatory in nature and focused on “shared destiny” and “shared values” (Obama November 9th 2015; Heller 2015).

In 2016, there were reports that the two leaders were slated to meet however as it was postponed to after the the November elections. There continued to be disagreements regarding the size of the defense package (Beaumont 2016a). In September 2016, the two leaders met in New York. The week prior to the meeting, the MoU regarding “extensive security and intelligence cooperation” was signed between the two that culminated in a new 10-year, \$38 billion military aid package. The MoU included “support for missile defense”, additional F-35 joint strike fighters and other military equipment. It was the largest military aid package in the history of the US, there was a 20% increase in comparison to the previous 10-year agreement. Obama himself seemed to acknowledge that their closed-door meetings had been contentious. The two leaders came face to face in an effort to display some sort of an agreement. From a military stand point, the administration had made good on its promises(Korte 2016b).

Prior to the announcement of the MoU, the White House kept Congress informed so as to avoid undermining the deal. Lindsey Graham, the chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee had already marked up a bill that would give Israel \$3.4 billion the following year, more than the amount negotiated by the White House. Graham condemned the administration for interference in the the appropriations process. The core of the dispute centered on the inclusion (by the administration) of Israeli missile-defense funding in the aid package. Previously, missile-defense aid was separate and allowed on requested and given on a the yearly basis. Therefore, under administration’s offer defense assistance substantively differed from previous administrations (Rogin 2016). This did not satisfy the Republicans in Congress who asserted their support to appropriate further defense funds to Israel. In aftermath of signing the new MoU Senator Graham and six other Senators introduced.

The MoU that was finally agreed upon “entailed, a \$38 billion deal which will expire in 2028” was sanctioned in the budget. This was a marked increase since the MoU



of 2007 which was due to expire in 2018 after which the new MoU would come into force. The MoU, entailed the following: annual payments of \$3.3 billion in foreign military financing, \$500 million annually towards missile defense funding, elimination of a longstanding provision that allowed Israel to use about 13 % of the U.S. aid to buy military fuel (White House September 2016). In Obama's statement regarding the MoU he stated, "Over the past eight years, my Administration has time and again demonstrated this commitment in word and deed. Since Fiscal Year 2009, the U.S. provided Israel with \$23.6 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds and another \$3.4 billion in funding for missile defense. Obama stated "the new 10-year MoU on security assistance that my Administration signed with the Government of Israel today is just the most recent reflection of my steadfast commitment to the security of the State of Israel" (White House September 2016).

Though Congress expected Obama to do more for Israel and the Gulf allies with respect to the Iran Deal, they were apprehensive about the MoU. Graham announced an additional aid package. Several Republicans and Democrats voiced support for Congress' ability to provide more than the MoU; Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker, (R-TN) and Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-MD) both lauded the MoU and asserted Congress could adjust funding, but declined to comment on Graham's bill until they had seen it (Zanotti 2016). The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for the Defense of Israel, 2016 (S. 3363), which aimed at appropriation of additional emergency funds for Israel in the amount of \$750 million in FMF and \$750 million in missile defense funding. The bill died in Congress (S. 3363 2016). The funding was in addition to the MoU and Iron Dome which was completed in 2011, produced by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. The primary test for the Iron Dome came in 2012, with the conflict between Hamas and Israel, the missile defense system proved its success. Since its installation the Israelis have upgraded certain parts like tracking and firing mechanisms. The U.S. began financially supporting Israel's development of Iron Dome in FY2011, Congress then called for Iron Dome technology sharing and coproduction with the U.S. In March 2014, the U.S. and Israeli governments signed a coproduction

agreement to enable components of the Iron Dome system to be manufactured in the U.S. (Sharp 2018).

In the immediate aftermath of the deal, the newly crowned King Salman of Saudi Arabia visited the White House for the first time since he ascended the throne. Obama pressed King Salman on the humanitarian issue of the Houthi's. The Saudi leadership also addressed their apprehensions about the alleviation of sanctions and the use of the funds to propel Iran's "nefarious activities in the region" (BBC News. September 5th 2015). The Obama Administration announced a proposed sale of ammunition of \$5.4 billion for Patriot Advanced Capability-3 to improve Saudi missile defenses (Blanchard 2015).

There was also an agreement regarding the sale of UH-60M Black Hawk Utility Helicopters estimated cost was \$495 million. The proposed sale was aimed at securing the alliance and improve the security of an important regional partner. This notice of a potential sale required congressional authorization (Defense Security Cooperation Agency October 14 2015). Congress rarely denied arms sales, Saudi Arabia would eventually double its existing fleet of 80 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters (Reuters October 15, 2015b).

In November 2015, the U.S. State Department approved the sale of \$1.29 billion in smart bombs to Saudi Arabia to help replenish supplies used in its battle against insurgents in Yemen and air strikes against IS in Syria. This reflected President Obama's pledge to bolster military support for Saudi Arabia and the GCC. The proposed sale included 22,000 smart and general purpose bombs, including 1,000 GBU-10 Paveway II Laser Guided Bombs, and over 5,000 Joint Direct Attack Munitions kits to turn older bombs into precision-guided weapons using GPS sign (Shalal 2015).

In addition, U.S. approved of a sale of up to 153 tanks, hundreds of machine guns and other military gear in a deal worth \$1.15 billion. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), Riyadh had requested the possible purchase of up to 133

American M1A2S Saudi Abrams Main Battle Tanks, M88A1/A2 Heavy Equipment Recovery Combat Utility Lift Evacuation System and Armored Recovery Vehicles (ARV). These would be configured to Saudi needs. In addition to this, there was a need to replace 20 damaged tanks in their fleet, the deal would include machine guns (M240) smoke grenade launchers and a range of other hardware. The State Department approved of the “possible” sale and notified Congress. (DSCA 2016; AFP 2016).

With the president’s term at its end, he paid a low-key visit in 2016 to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulazi, Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense. The meeting revolved around IS, Iran and the “destabilizing activities (The White House June 17th 2016).

This was once again an effort for the two allies to reconcile differences and reassure allies. This was Obama’s fourth and final trip to Saudi Arabia since becoming president. As the conversation was more about ISIS and Yemen, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter and CIA Director John Brennan were among the officials that accompanied Obama. In addition, Carter also met with the defense ministers of the GCC in an effort to press them to provide additional economic and political support to Iraq and cooperation against IS (Black 2016).

During the US-GCC 2016 Summit, Iran and IS occupied most of the Summit as they were the main threats to the region. The Joint Statement emphasized the importance of the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 2254. The most important aspect was “to remain vigilant” over Iran’s activity, pledged to increase information sharing on Iran. In addition to dealing with Iran, the two sides agreed on combined military exercises in 2017 as well as to train specially-designated Special Operations Forces (SOF) and a shared commitment to defeat terrorism and strengthen the counterterrorism partnership (The White House April 21st 2016).

Though it seemed as though the U.S. and members of the GCC were getting along, beneath the surface there was still tension between the two sides. This was

heightened when Congress put forth the The Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, (JASTA) commonly called the 9/11 bill which passed the Republican-controlled Congress with bipartisan support. The president was forced to sign the bill into law. The controversial bill would allow U.S. courts to hold the Saudi government responsible if it was found to have played a role in funding or assisting the attacks. S. 2040 and H.R. 3815 was a major issue and had the ability to create further schisms in the U.S.-Saudi partnership. The Senate bill sponsored by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) had 12 Republican and 10 Democratic cosponsors, while the House bill sponsored by Rep. Pete King (R-NY2) had 10 Democratic and 9 Republican cosponsors. The Obama Administration warned that the bill, if passed, could destroy the alliance with Saudi Arabia and create further security dilemmas in the region (S.2040 2016; H.R.3815 2015) On September 28, 2016, both houses of Congress passed the bill into law after overriding a veto from President Obama which had occurred five days earlier. This was the first and only presidential veto override of Obama's administration

As the president's term in office was winding down, there was a great deal the president wanted to achieve in the realm of foreign policy which included a rapprochement with Cuba . But as the new administration was set to take over, there was a final blow to U.S.-Israel relations that came in December 2016. The president through the U.N. was able to reassert his power and display his belief against the settlements. This came in the form of the U.S. absentia on the UN vote on the settlements - UN resolution 2334. The Resolution passed by 14 delegates with the U.S. absentia (UNSC 2016). Ambassador Samantha Power explained the US stance by stating the Israeli settlement "The United States has been sending a message that the settlements must stop privately and publicly for nearly five decades". The absentia by the U.S. was heavily criticized by the incoming Trump administration. Netanyahu went to the extent of appealing to trump, however as he was not sworn in the decision lay with Obama (Beaumont 23 dec 2016 The Guardian).

Throughout the 8 years of the Obama administration, the US allies both European as well as the Middle East were considered enablers as well as constraints on US strategy towards Iran. Obama's relations with the regional allies hinged on reassurance in terms of support regarding Iran. This included meetings, presidential visits and military aid packages. The P5 in fact enabled the President's strategy and his leadership in dealing with Iran. Russia, China and to varying degrees France created problems for the negotiators especially the U.S. It was Saudi and Israel that required a greater deal of persuasion given their fears about Iran. The President through his visits as well as military aid packages attempted to reassure the allies. It worked to a certain extent that being avowing a direct confrontation between Saudi-Iran as well as Israel-Iran. Therefore though the president along with the P5 were able to assert their leadership in negotiations the deal, the non signatories proved to be far more difficult to convince. They formed the coalition of the 'unwilling'. Netanyahu tested Obama's leadership by appealing to the domestic politics in the US. This battle between the leaders put pressure on the bilateral ties between the countries. Therefore in an effort to gain Israelis support the president offered copious military agreements to the Israel as well as Saudi as well as supported their wars against Hamas and Yemen respectively.

Therefore international allies are considered a blessing as well as a curse. As result of Obama working with the P5 and getting all members on board that Iran was forced to the negotiating table. As a combined effort with the change in leadership in Iran and the P5's perseverance that the Iran Deal came to fruition. Obama has been accredited with working with the P5 but at the same time has been blamed for the deteriorating relations between the US and the region that is Saudi and Israel.

## **Conclusion**

### **THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY**

#### **Presidential Deference, Assertiveness and Acquiescence**

*“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time”*

*- Barack H.Obama, February 5th 2008*

In the realm of foreign policy and strategic interests, presidential leadership is a rarely discussed area. Therefore this thesis has sought to better understand the manner in which leadership plays a role in making policy. It is an important and one of the pertinent tools in the making of U.S. foreign policy. Though from a constitutional perspective, Congress might seem to embody greater powers, a president has the ability to lead in matters pertaining to foreign affairs by sheer fact of the office he represents and the role America plays in the international community. The president has discretionary powers; tools that enable him to unilaterally make foreign policy. During various phases in the history of the U.S., the presidency depending on his belief in the powers awarded to him has either used his powers confined under the condition or extended and over extended his powers as the the constitutional provision are broad and off a great deal of ambiguity.

### **The Buck Stops Here Or Does It? The President & Pre-eminence in Foreign Policy**

The president has at his disposal, the various federal departments that advise him on matters pertaining to a particular policy be it foreign or domestic. He also has a White House Staff as well as the NSC that advises him, however in the final analysis it is up to the President on the course of action to be taken. This is mainly regarding the bigger issues and not so much the day to day. Presidents very often use a mixture of styles when it comes to policy making sometimes it involves delegating or even taking complete control. Very often president focus more on the White House team rather that may included members of the NSC and the departments in making policy. The White House in addition also pal a crucial role of policy advisors.

The presidency from the Articles of the Confederation to the Constitutional Convention to the Constitution has undergone some major changes. In the Articles of Confederacy, the Congress was the supreme decision making body as there were flaws in the system, they were rectified with constitutional convention give the presidents broad powers that have overtime been used by president's to extend their powers beyond those envisioned by the Framers. Through the history of the U.S. president's have extended their powers through the Constitution, inherent and discretionary powers. Thus, the

presidency has become 'Imperial'. President's right from Washington's unilateral declaration of Neutrality to Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus, to the Monroe Doctrine displayed unilateralism. President's like FDR used partisanship within Congress to extend his powers . He was one of the few President's to dominate both spheres; domestic as well as foreign.

The Cold War, constrained as well as permitted presidents to act. During the Cold War, presidents operated within the confines of an 'overriding threat' therefore they were able to exert broad powers that were awarded to them by a deferential Congress. This pertained particularly when it came to secrecy and intelligence. In some ways, the Cold War imperiled the presidency this was seen in a number of instances ; Truman and Korea, Johnson and Vietnam , Nixon and Watergate, Carter and Iran, Reagan and the Boland Amendments. Congress was rarely notified about the nefarious activities of the White House. When Congress was actually briefed, they deferred to the executive on most occasions to the President and gave him the green light. It was not only Congress that deferred to the president, but the decision making process made centralization easier. The National Security Act of 1947 created the NSC gave new meaning to the centralization of foreign policy making. The NSC was comprised of the departments depending on the issue or the crisis at hand varies. The staff of the NSC was expanded with every successive president. Thus further limiting the role of the Departments in some respects. On the other hand, there have been Presidents like Kennedy who preferred using his kitchen table and White House advisors. He also made use of ad hoc groups like the EXCOMM in times of national emergencies. President's tend to prefer informal processes rather than a formalized processes. The use a president makes of the Departments in his decision making process is often dependent of the relationship the President has with members of the cabinet.

During the Cold War, partisan polarization in foreign policy making was not as relevant as it is today. The Democrats and Republicans in Congress to a large extent supported the President's agenda. This polarization was seen in domestic politics.



Democratic president's found it difficult to get the support from conservatives within their party. In the aftermath of Vietnam, there was a breakdown in foreign policy consensus that has not recovered since then. The Liberals within the Democratic Party were against presidential adverses while the conservatives within the party supported the war along with the Republicans. This together with the Civil Rights bills 1964 and 1968 were the last straws that broke the Democratic stronghold in the South. Democrat-Congress began to rein in the imperial presidency as a result of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate Scandal. This was no easy feat as Congress had already granted by way of deference, enormous powers.

Foreign policy very often emanates from the White House, though foreign policy bureaucracies play an important role in the decision making process, its very often that policy directives have a trickle down effect. This is especially when it comes to the big foreign policy decisions. President's have different styles of governing as well as organizing their White House.

### **A Historical Analysis of US-Iran Relations Since the Cold War**

In discussing presidential leadership and the making of foreign policy, tracing the trajectory of US-Iran relations is an important tool in understanding Obama's policy. U.S. policy towards Iran can be divided into two parts the pre-revolutionary period and the post revolutionary period. In the pre-revolutionary period presidents coddled the Shah and granted large military sales as a result of the Soviet threat to the region. The Shah a U.S. ally took advantage of the external environment. The Post Revolutionary period was defined as a duality of outward animosity and criticism coupled secret deal and negotiations.

The aftermath of the World War II and the beginning of the Cold War altered US-Iran relations. This alteration by successive president's would eventually lead to a client state that created a backlash in the form of the Islamic Revolution and the worsening of

ties between the two countries in the form of phrases like ‘The Great Satan’ and ‘The Mad Mullahs’.

In dealing with Iran, there was a difference in dealing with the leadership prior to the revolution and in the aftermath of the revolution, that eventually shaped Washington’s relationship with Tehran. In the pre-revolutionary period the Shah was coddled like a child and his demands in terms of military sales were met as presidents feared a communist take over of the region. The repressive polices of the Shah and the the U.S. not pushing for democratic reform together with the Shah’s military appetite eventually led to the Shah’s downfall and the resurrection of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Washington’s misguided approach towards the government eventually sealed the U.S. fate with Iran. The non-engagement policy together with secret deal with Tehran provided limited opportunity for the relationship. The reason for an analysis of the historical relationship between the countries was important to understand Obama’s need to rectify the relations.

The U.S. relations with Iran cannot be seen in a vacuum but rather through the eyes of president’s in an effort to acquire a better understanding of the situation. At first U.S. presidents saw Iran the same way they saw other countries, through the lens of the Cold War - a battle of good over evil. Throughout most of the Cold War, president’s dominated the foreign policy making process and Congress played a deferential role. However there were times prior to the formation of Islamic Republic of Iran, Congress was apprehensive with its relations with U.S. arms sales to Iran that reached exorbitant heights, this was paid through the medium of oil. By the end of the Shah’s reign, Iran was heavily in debt to the U.S. over the military expenditure. For the U.S., Iran was considered the pillar of U.S, strategy in the region. The Cold War strategy of ‘supporting any friend and opposing any foe’. In the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, U.S. policy changed this was especially true with the White House’s icy reception to the new form of governance in Iran that eventually set a trend for U.S. policy makers. With the end of the Cold War, there were attempts by the Clinton administration to reach out to the Iranian

leadership especially with the relatively moderate government of Rafsanjani. The outreach was short lived as the president's new policy of dual containment dominated his policy of the region, together with bringing peace in the middle east between the Israelis and Palestinians. During the Bush years, though the president followed an anti-Iran policy, there were overtures made but this was akin to the 'hidden hand'. The U.S. supported the negotiations between the EU+3 from a far and was unwilling to get involved in the negotiating game. Additionally, there were other issues that took precedents, the 'war on terror'. Therefore, Iran was pushed to the back burner.

The presidents during the Cold War and more so prior to the Vietnam debacle, were able to drive the foreign policy agenda with little or no interference from Congress. Infighting within the White House was not uncommon. For instance, during the Kennedy administration the fight was between the careered politicians like Dean Rusk and the New Frontiersmen. During the Carter administration, the internal discord had a direct impact on U.S. policy towards Iran. This was especially between with one Brzezinski and Vance. However, the Islamic Revolution followed by the asylum of the Shah and the Hostage Crisis questioned the capability of the the American presidency which in the words of Edward Kennedy created a 'crisis in confidence' This gave Regan the springboard he required to win an election and capitalize on Carter's misfortune. Regan's 'shoot from the hip' leadership style was seen by the buildup of American military. The 1980 election. On matters pertaining to Iran, Regan had a tainted history. The 1980 election is subject to a great deal of controversy as there have been sources who state that Reagan's team colluded with the Khomeni factions in Iran to delay the release of the hostages so that it would affect the electoral outcome. In doing so Reagan created in roads with the Iranians that would eventually lead to the Iran Contra Affair. Throughout the Reagan years, he had a underhanded strategy towards Iran, one that was set in motion by the October Surprise. When US hostages were taken by Hezbollah, Reagan once again used backchannels to aid the release of the hostages. This came to be down as the arms for hostages, the deal emanated from the White House with the approval of Reagan. The revenue gained from the sale of arms was used to fund he contras in Nicaragua that were

fighting against the Sandinista government. This went against the Boland amendments that limited the aid to the Contras thus the president and his team of advisors went against Congress and acted unilaterally. Reagan denies knowledge of his in his autobiography *An American Life*. During the first Bush presidency, dealing with Saddam's Iraq was of greater concern than Iran. The first gulf war displayed the ability of an American president to garner support from within the region in an effort to form a coalition of the willing. However, though Congress was it was done later.

Clinton's strategy towards Iran was manifold it included dual containment as well as engagement. Therefore, Clinton and the State Department strategized on a policy that would contain both Iran as well as Iraq through sanctions. This strategy was altered with the change in leadership in Iran. With the more moderate President Khatami, Clinton displayed a readiness to engage however there were other factors that hampered the engagement especially external outside factors and Clinton's own need to bring about long lasting peace between Palestine and Israel. This together with the battles with the Republican and a hostile Congress took up most of Clinton's time as President. In matters pertaining to foreign policy which the president was not adept, he had to deal with an array of humanitarian crises that became the hallmark of his foreign policy agenda. The Clinton presidency however has been defined by his relations with the Republican Congress, more poignantly with the then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. In terms of leadership the president was a great orator as well as his opinion polls at the of the impeachment were at an all time high, the economy was booming and he aimed at building a bridge to the 21st century.

The presidency of George Bush was fraught from the very beginning, with the Supreme Court's decision to award the state of Florida to Bush. Therefore, the honeymoon that most president's witness was myriad with concerns over his ability to govern though government was unified. He attempted to work Democrats on social issues in an effort to bring about a bipartisan agenda. His white House was an experienced one, stocked with his father's cronies and advisors. However there was one caveat that made

all the difference. The president was far more conservative than his father. He catered to the Christian Right, to the neoconservatives when it came to his agenda. Foreign policy was not a major concern, however after 9/11 foreign policy and the War on Terror took all if not most of the president's time and political capital. The attacks and the rally round the flag, gave the president unbridled powers as well as political capital that he did not have prior the terror attacks. Democrats and Republicans alike flocked to support the President with the exception of a few. The 'War on Terror' was extended to the 'Axis of Evil' encapsulating Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Bush's rhetoric towards Iran was antagonistic and was more in tune with sounding the war drums especially in the aftermath of the discovery of Natanz and the NIE 2007. The President's policy was at first one of containment especially through sanctions and later involved engagement in the primitive sense. However, Bush along with hardliners within the administration as well as Iranian hardliners made negotiation impossible, this was coupled with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq gave the President limited his maneuverability. There were missed opportunities when it came to Iran, in the aftermath of 9/11 there seemed to be a chance for the two sides to work together however hopes were dashed especially with the 9/11 report that stated the possibility of Iranian involvement. Therefore for the most part, US policy towards Iran was either shaped by the domestic constraints as well as constraints from allies abroad. In an attempt to renew US foreign policy Obama was determined to set aside these constraints and change US policy.

### **Presidential Pre-Eminence or Presidential Acquiescence: Barack Obama and Iran**

Obama's tumultuous relationship with Iran during his 8 years in office was fraught were numerous issues that did not pertain to Iran but nevertheless overflowed. Obama throughout his presidency was condemned for overlooking Iran's dismal human rights record, as well as their support for terror organizations. During his time in the White House, Obama had to deal with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, America's abysmal standing in the international community and a domestic crisis the lengths of which have never been seen since the Great Depression. In addition to these initial crises inherited by

Obama , there were others such as the fallout of the Arab Spring in Syria , the rise and growth of the IS together with dealing with a resurgent Russia and China. In dealing with the list of crises ,Obama has had various success and failures. Deeming whether Obama's policy was a success or failure was subject to partisan rancor as well as his ability to extend himself. In spite of propagating a post-partisan presidency, most Democrats supported the President's strategy while most Republicans attempted to discredit the President.

In his campaign for the presidency, Obama promised 'change' with the slogan 'change we can believe in'. His main endeavors were to reset relations with adversarial nations; deepen ties and reassure traditional allies. On many issues the president did deliver and on others he fell short. Though President Obama was condemned for his failed policy in Syria he stuck to his agenda by avoiding a boots on the ground strategy for most part of it. When it came to Iran, though there were significant constraining factors, the President was able to deliver on an agreement with Iran.

The ultimate deal was not perfect as it did not include certain aspects however the deal was aimed at Iran's nuclear program alone. Obama 's critics stated that in matters pertaining to foreign policy he 'led from behind'. Though the P5 negotiations were not held by the White House and by the president directly, these negotiations were nevertheless driven by the executive branch specifically the President. The backchannel with Iran was orchestrated at the behest of the President and by members of the executive branch. The negotiators also kept the president informed on the happening in the meetings. Thus the negotiators with the President's approval and direction conducted the backchannel meetings that aided in the deal making process. In looking at the leadership making models put forth by Cecil V. Crabb, Obama and Kerry fall under the the President as his own secretary of State it was the model of FDR and Cordell Hull.

Though on the surface it may have look as though Kerry was running the show but it was in fact the President who provided the leadership. President Obama was a delegator especially when it came to matter like Iran. The President delegated this task to

skilled negotiators as well as the State Department. However, there were times that the President commanded the situation entirely this was especially true with his letters to the Ayatollah in 2009 and then later his congratulatory phone call to Rohani in 2013 that shaped policy. The 2013 communication had a greater impact as Iranian election signified a change in direction from the leadership (ie Ayatollahs). It was a display of US willingness to continue negotiations.

Therefore, Obama laid down the ground work for the negotiation process and left it to the experts to hash out the specifics of the deal. It was a case of the hidden hand presidency at times. Obama was willing to meet with the members of the negotiating team as well as experts in an effort to further his goal. He was also able for most part to keep Congress at bay except when it became necessary to add unilateral sanctions. The President for his part also in attempt to take charge of the situation through EOs was able to add unilateral sanctions on Iran by expanding existing laws. At the same time, it did display presidential pre-eminence in foreign policy. As Obama along with his team guided the process as well as circumnavigated Congress.

The backchannel negotiation that were privy to only a few within the administration. The backchannel when came to light was condemned but the Republicans in Congress. However the backchannel was not a new phenomena that was carried out by the Obama administration, Carter and Regan both carried out backchannel negotiations with the Iranians in an effort to reach an end to the crisis at the time. Backchannel negotiations are also not unlawful and cannot be considered as collusion as they are undertaken by the administration and therefore are privy to the use of executive power. There were members in Congress with the consent of the administration were also involved in these negotiations, this was especially true in the case of Senator (at the time) John Kerry.

The leadership that Obama provided especially in the case of Iran was centralized. Obama had a foreign policy vision, unlike many of his Democratic predecessors who focussed on domestic politics . This distinct vision demanded that his set of advisors

carried out his vision. In this way president Obama occupied a preeminent position in the foreign policy making process. Members of his advisory team included William Burs, Jake Sullivan, Puneet Talwar, Einhorn, John Kerry, Wendy Sherman, Susan Rice , Ben Rhodes, Dennis Ross and Hilary Clinton, all these members carried out their tasks on the borders of the President. Though it may have seemed as though Kerry and his team at the State Department led the negotiations it was Obama who had the vision to negotiate with Iran and Kerry and State Department brought the vision to fruition

Obama was faced with a challenging task of saving the domestic crisis as well as the crisis of American leadership abroad. This has been a unique task one very much like that faced by FDR when he ascended the presidency. Obama's task on the foreign policy from vis-a-vis Iran was fraught with difficulties from the very start. First there was the age old distrust and dislike that existed with the formation of the Islamic Republic. In addition to this, was the leadership and the stubborn nature not to capitulate to the great powers as well as continue to support terrorist organizations that threaten one of America's key allies (Israel) and lastly and most important the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region and Iran's nuclear program. During the course of the negotiation process though Obama and members of the administration stated an all option policy, the preferred route was diplomacy and not further embroiling the U.S. in a war in the Middle East. Obama's unclenched fist without preconditions was new and it was. An opportunity for both sides to work upon in an effort to build some resemblance of trust. However with domestic pressure , as well as the discovery of the Qom facility and the rejection of the the fuel swap in 2009, put the Obama administration on the the necessary section-track with Iran.

Obama though preferred the diplomatic route had to employ the hybrid approach as pressure had been building up from all sides this included Congress as well as the international allies. In addition to UN sanctions Congress pushed for unilateral sanctions that were supported by Democrats as well and therefore Obama was forced to sign these sanctions despite his reservations.



Obama also took advantage of the change in leadership in Iran, in an effort to reach a negotiated agreement. This was together with Rouhani's own domestic need to negotiate Brough about the agreement. However Congress was and the middle east allies were skeptical of the president's moves. As a result of Obama's foreign policy ideals that did not fit with traditional republicans or democrats, it gave him greater room for maneuverability.

There were many especially Republicans that tagged Obama's leadership as that of "leading from behind". However, this did not fit with his leadership style, Obama was not only a director but a delegator as well this is with special reference to Iran. President's also tend to modify their leadership style to deal with different situations. In some cases it may have looked as though Obama was taking a back seat especially with Libya, Syria and in dealing with IS . However Obama preferred not to use presidential power unilaterally and relied on a multilateral approach .For Obama , this seemed a more prudent approach one that gelled with Obama 's world viewing his foreign policy beliefs.

In most foreign policy issues, though there was a significant domestic involvement, president's still have a great deal of autonomy. President Obama displayed his autonomy by continuing the negotiation process as well as by banding together Democrats to block the procedural vote. The negotiation process also involved secret talks between John Kerry and the Omani leadership. Oman became America's conduit with Iran. Therefore, only a select number in Congress ones that Obama trusted were involved in the negotiations or secret meetings. These secret meetings were detested by Republicans but there was not much that they could do to put a end to it. The Republicans did not have a moral leg to stand on given the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra fiasco.

## **Congress and the Obama Presidency: Deference, Acquiescence, Assertive or Active**

Since the inception of the Republic, there has always been a tussle between the branches of government this has especially become prominent as a result of partisan polarization.

Though Obama geared his presidency towards a post-partisan era, partisan warfare was fierce far was akin to what was seen during the Clinton years. There was a duality of reasons for this included Obama's policies as well as. An unwilling and uncompromising Republican Party.

In the first two years of his presidency, Obama did not have trouble in getting support for his endeavors. There were many Democrats that were concerned with the president's course of action but nevertheless rendered partisan support. However, in 2009 the Democrats joined with Republicans in condemning the crackdown as well as put forth legislation in this regard. While the administration for strategic reasons did not condemn the crackdown at first.

In dealing with Iran, Bush's freedom agenda was still very much part of the Congress during the Obama presidency this was prominently seen in the aftermath elections and the subsequent crackdown. Members of Congress more Republicans than Democrats put forward resolutions that supported the idea of free and fair democratic elections which were subtle ways of promoting regime change.

The Republicans were also quick to abandon the diplomatic route in favor of sanctions while Democrats gave the president more room to maneuver. Though partisanship and gridlock were a common feature, the bills the Republicans introduced were much harsher than the Democrats.

Throughout The negotiations with Iran, Congress played devils advocate. This was especially on display during the hearings with doubts raised as to the longevity and outcome of the prolonged negotiations. Event when the leadership or at least part of the

leadership in Tehran underwent a change in the the form of the more hopeful Rouhani, Congress was divided with many of the Democrats supporting and sending letters to the president to take advantage of the moment while others mostly republicans skeptical about the leadership

In the aftermath of striking the interim agreement with Iran, though the Democrats were skeptical as to the outcome of the final agreement, Obama managed to tie the hands of the Republicans by linking sanctions to discrediting the agreement. Once the agreement was in place, the Republicans attempted to assert their influence over the agreement but instead received a harsh blow.

There were other instances wherein Congress under Republican control were far more assertive, this was especially when Speaker John Boehner invited Netanyahu to address the joint session in Congress above the President's invitation. The test to Obama's leadership of his party in Congress came in 2015 in the aftermath of signing the agreement. As per the Iran Review Act, Congress by law had the right to review the credibility of the deal, however the Democrats blocked the vote through a procedural vote. In the final analysis, the Democrats irrespective of their divisions as well as their skepticism regarding the deal, were able to prevent the onslaught from the Republicans. The Democratic leadership even aided the president in lobbying for the deal. The Democrats, protected presidential pre-eminence in the case of the agreement and blocked the Republican overtures. The end result was that the president was successful as a result of his party in Congress. The vote also displayed Obama's relations with the Democratic leadership in Congress like Nancy Pelosi who aided the President in skillfully navigating the lobbying process. Therefore, though at times it seemed as though Congress had asserted its authority over policy, Obama with the Democrats were ultimately victorious. For the Republicans, they held out hope that the the next president would withdrawal or renegotiate the deal.

## **The Reassure(er)-in-chief: Obama, the P5 & Regional Allies**

Throughout the 8 years of his presidency, President Obama and the administration worked with the P5 in the strategy towards Iran. The end result was after about 6 years in attempting to get a deal with Iran, the President and his allies were successful. The P5 though accepted that the deal did have its limitations stood by the deal. The President found it difficult to get Russia and China on board for the 4th round of UN sanctions however once that was out of the way, it was rarely that the 6 nations were not on the same page. There were some cracks in the alliances but the regional allies created the bigger problem for Obama.

In the realm of dealing with the P5 the President did not have to wrangle them for support. However there were instances wherein the allies created trouble for the President the first instance was in imposing UN sanctions on Iran which China and Russia had refused. In an effort to get the two on board the President had to make concessions and was flexible in negotiating with them as there was greater purpose, that bring Iran to the table. The allies were not pleased about Obama's backchannel that focused on a bilateral rather than multilateral approach this was especially a problem with the French. However if it were not for these confidence building measures undertaken by the Obama administration negotiating with Iran would have been far more tedious and difficult. In the aftermath of the interim agreement, it was members of the Obama administration and Obama himself who had to reassure the French leadership in an effort to avoid further delays. The end result, Obama was successful in wrangling the P5. Therefore, the US went from its lip-service support of the P5 under the Bush administration to actually leading the P5 under the Obama administration

The regional allies, Saudi and Israel made it increasingly difficult for the US to negotiate with Iran. In disapproving with the President's policy, they had the support of the Republicans in Congress. Obama had to offer incentives to the allies in an effort to gain their support. The Iran deal did not come cheap. For the Saudis, though the US aid in the ongoing war in Yemen as well as the IS is not part of the deal, it is part of the larger

strategic game that is at the heart of the US engagement towards Iran. In addition to US support against the common threat ie IS as well as support in Yemen, the US also provided Saudi with a number of military packages that were worth billions of dollars in an effort to display support for their 'friend'.

Obama found it difficult to get Israel on board. To gain Netanyahu's support, Obama not only had to pay with foreign aid as well as the latest military technology but with political capital. There was far greater support for Israel than Saudi among members of Congress. The President was condemned time and again for his support of the negotiation process. It also seemed at one point that Netanyahu's battle against Obama would lead to presidential acquiescing to Netanyahu and Congress. However, Obama was ultimately victorious in getting Netanyahu on board however relations between the two leaders had reached a low point by the end of 2016. There were other factors that created the schism in the relations, this included Obama's lack of anti-Iranian rhetoric during the 2009 crackdown, the Arab Spring, as well as Israel war with Hamas and Obama attempting to rein Netanyahu but the *pièce de résistance* was the US absentia vote at the UN on building new settlements (December 2016).

Therefore the President's allies - Saudi and Israel though had no technical say in the negotiations created roadblocks by shaping US as well as Congressional opinion against the deal. The President armed with the Democrats and with the changing tide of public opinion relating to US foreign policy were able to deliver. The European allies as well lobbied for the deal which paid off.

### **President Obama and Presidential Pre-eminence?**

In the final analysis, the question was whether and to what extent did President Obama display his preeminence in foreign policy vis-a-vis members of the administration, Congress and international allies?

In many respects, President Obama did display his preeminence (with respect to Iran). The motive to negotiate with Iran was a campaign promise and one immense

priority on his agenda. Therefore the negotiations with P5 included a greater push from the White House unlike the previous administration wherein the White House played a limited role in the negotiations. As Iran was placed at the one top issues of his agenda, it was dealt with by the Obama White House along with trusted members of the State Department and (who had experience) was not solely left to the bureaucracy.

The second factor that displayed presidential pre-eminence was that though there were skeptics within the administration, like Hillary Clinton and others they served at the pleasure of the president and therefore had to do the president's bidding. Decisions within the the Obama White House were mostly centralized therefore Obama was the director. He had a vision for America and that vision came to fruition as a result of members of the administration. Like any director, the president delegated to the State Department when necessary , this was true of Iran. Decisions though centralized were not made unilaterally but were made in cognizance with members of the P5 as well as members of administration, Congress was kept in formed by executive privilege gave Obama dominance over issues.

A third aspect was congressional dominance, deference and defiance. Both sides of the aisle were skeptical over the negotiations with Iran, but it was the Republicans who were more defiant than the Democrats which became a cause of concern when they began to push the president to impose stronger sanctions against Iran. The president complied on a few occasions and signed these resolutions into law only when it became unavoidable. Most of the resolutions only passed one House and died in Congress itself. Congressional assertiveness came in the form of the hearings, these included the nuclear program, ballistic missile program, regional dimensions which included concern for the allies. When it came to the congressional vote on Iran as per the Iran Review Act 2015, President Obama was able to build coalitions in Congress within the Democratic Party to circumnavigate the Republicans. In doing so, the administration was able to block the Republican vote on the Iran Deal. Unfortunately the president was unable to pass the the agreement by a treaty. There were times that Congress asserted itself which made the

president look weak, this was especially when Congress colluded with Netanyahu. This came in the form of his address to the a joint Congress in 2015 over the head of the president. This posturing by Republican-controlled Congress as well as the external allies could have derailed the negotiation process as well as the deal entirely.

However, for most part of his presidency, the Republicans had limited control over the negotiation process as all parties involved wanted to reach an agreement. However, the Republicans were victorious in two aspects first the imposition sanctions and second making the Iran deal a political agreement and not a treaty. Obama was convinced of Republican assertiveness and therefore framed the Iran Deal as a political agreement and not a treaty which would require approval from the senate.

The fourth aspect, the president displayed his predominance on foreign policy through the lens of the U.S. allies. In dealing with the both the P5 as well as the Middle East allies Obama's leadership was once again tested. The test came from China and Russia and Saudi and Israel. In dealing with these allies Obama implored a range of tools including the threat of sanctions when it came to Russia and China . On the other hand, while dealing with the Middle East allies the White House employed a strategy of "coddling the allies" as well as "pay any price, bear any burden support any friend, oppose an foe". There was a great fear within the administration that Netanyahu would attack the Iranian nuclear facilities that would draw the U.S. into another war in the region. Though Obama had misgivings about the war in Gaza as well as in Yemen, he supported U.S. allies. In addition to this, the president provided copious amounts of military aid packages to combat the Iranians as well as to fight the respective wars. However in spite of this, the relations between the leaders deteriorated.

In the final analysis, though Obama's success in dealing with Iran was lasted only the length of his presidency, it is nevertheless an important lesson in understanding the scope and dimensions of presidential leadership .

## **Epilogue**

### **THE UNRAVELING OF THE DEAL President Trump's Policy Towards Iran**

*"I am announcing today that the United States will withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal."*

*- Donald J. Trump, 45th President of the United  
States of America May 9<sup>th</sup> 2018*



The central theme of the thesis is the importance of presidential leadership and the ability to lead domestically as well as internationally. The leadership in the Trump can be defined as the ability to wield a 'big stick'. Historically, 'the big stick effect' has been mixed; with it being a failure in some instances while in others being successful. A president is considered successful through his legislative record though it is early in his term, the President has managed to overturn a number of policies supported by the previous administration, in doing so has upheld his campaign promises.

U.S. leadership both at home and abroad has come under tremendous fire as a result of President Trump's policies. During the 2016 presidential race, he floated several ideas regarding the future of American leadership worldwide; this included walking away from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which was considered disadvantageous to the U.S., renegotiating or withdrawing from the Iran Deal and NATO members playing a greater role in the burden sharing. He also pledged to shore up the middle east alliance in the aftermath of the trust deficit created by Obama. The 'America First' strategy was being dubbed as isolationist rather than the usual global outreach of the U.S.

During the campaign, the then candidate Trump rhetoric, created a great deal of uncertainty for friends and foes alike. As president, who was elected without a popular vote but with unified government offered the president a great deal of political leverage. In the beginning, much like his predecessors he followed a strategy of 'striking while the iron is hot'. This was especially in terms of the TPP, however there was a lack of clarity as to how to deal with other issues and later with the passing of the budget which was by no means an easy feat and led to a government shutdown

Presidential leadership and presidential unilateralism have for the most part gone hand in hand. President Trump in most of his foreign policy endeavors has had the support of his party who have either been active or deferred to the president. There have however been a few high ranking Republicans that disagreed with the president including Sen Bob Crocker, Lindsay Graham and the late John McCain.

There have been times when the president lacks support within his own party, the Helsinki Summit with Putin was one such occasion. He received a great deal of criticism from his own party in the immediate aftermath of the Summit. The fallout from which had put the president on the defensive in his siding with the Russian Premier rather than U.S intelligence agencies over Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections.

Another wherein Trump and the GOP did not see eye to eye was the matter pertaining to Saudi Arabia. This specially pertaining to the ongoing support by the U.S. in Yemen together with arms sales to Saudi that was blocked by the Republican-controlled Senate (June 2019).

For the past two years, President Trump has wielded immense authority in matters pertaining to foreign policy. On the one hand it maybe too early to tell whether the magnitude of his actions can be equivalent to the return of the ‘imperial presidency’ as they were done with the deference as well as consensus of the Republican-controlled Congress.

The president’s “America First” strategy has generated a great deal of support specifically in the rust belt as well as the Bible Belt but has created a trust deficit among many in Congress as well as the international allies. It is this base, made up of the core supporters that the President is focussed on. The midterm loss of the Republicans in the House was a stark realization for the president in considering his policies. The areas that played an important role was the presidential perception together with immigration policy as well as the economy. Through the tax cut won favor with many, presidential perception played an even bigger role. This together with the Democrat strategy of focussing on local elections as well as the general tied working against the president , the loss was eminent.

In the final analysis, though the America first strategy has its benefits for the U.S. , it could eventually unravel a system with the US playing a key role as partner. This would mean that the US has or is moving towards an isolationist policy . A role that it has

not played since the interwar period. Therefore is the U.S .and the its leadership willing to play such a role?

### **Trump and Iran: From Adherence to the Beating of War Drums**

President Trump's foreign policy has been based on 'America First' there is a pectin of an 'America Only Policy'. This is especially true in matters pertaining to the JCPOA. The president at this point enjoys high approval ratings which to a great extent is indicative of local approval for policy alterations. In spite of the criticism, the president continues to wield enormous power.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, the Republicans went on the attack against the Iran Deal . The anti-dealers were fierce in their opposition towards the president. The then-candidate Trump toiled with three ideas ripping up the deal, renegotiating the deal or keeping the deal. The latter of the three was the least viable option (politically).

As president, Trump and his team of advisors, digressed on how to deal with Iran , on the one had there were those that supported the deal like the then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson while others were against U.S. support of the deal. In the beginning the president adhered to the deal by waving off sanctions as part of the JCPOA requirement. However, simultaneously like his predecessors, he coupled the wavier with stronger sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program.

The Administration also undertook a review of U.S. policy towards Iran. During this phase, the president continued to adhere to the tenants of the JCPOA which included sanction waivers. By October 2017, the Administration was set to change policy, in doing so it decertified the deal , which stipulated a review by Congress under the 'Iran Review Act 2015'.

The decertification of deal put the future of the deal in the hands of a Republican Congress that were once against the deal under Obama . This gave them the opportunity to alter the deal or even state that Iran had not complied with the agreement which would allow the president to withdraw U.S. support . However, Congress allowed the time period allotted for such a task to lapse. Therefore, even though members of congress were handed the tools to act they were either unable to do so or they lacked the will. Congress as well as the president deferred to one another thus securing the deal (for the time being). Sanctions incognizance with the JCPOA were waived off once again.

This deference was short lived as the president stated emphatically there would be a change in policy. This change came on May 9th 2018, the president announced that the U.S. would withdraw from the JCPOA and sanctions would be reimposed. The imposition of sanctions was a two-phased approach wherein in the first set of sanctions would be imposed in August and then the nuclear-related sanction would be reimposed in November.

Thus, the Trump administration has effectively reversed the 8 years of the Obama administration's strategy of rapprochement towards Iran. In doing so the president had once again rallied his conservative base, as well as the regional allies like Saudi and Israel.

Since the withdrawal from the deal and the re-imposition of sanctions on Iran, the strategy towards Iran has undergone a great deal of change. This has been on display not only in rhetoric but in action as well. In the aftermath of the sanctions, the Administration had granted waivers in terms of oil import to eight countries including India, these waivers were temporary. In April 2019, the Administration announced the removal of waivers which meant that these countries had to find alternate sources of oil in order to avoid being sanctioned as well as meeting their requirements. The strategy behind the move was to economically strangle Iran in an effort to bring them to the negotiating table. In addition to the oil embargo, the U. S. sent the USS Abraham Lincoln into the Straits of Hormuz in order to protect U.S. allies in the region and check Iranian threat of closing

the Strait. The Iranians, have also ratcheted up the rhetoric in stating that if the European s(still part of the JCPOA) were to comply with U.S. posturing they would begin enrichment at pre-deal levels. In adoption to this, the Iranians also shot down a U.S. drone and the administration threatened the use of force under the previous AUMF's. In regard to the use of force, Congress was not even notified. There were many many in Congress who do not support this posturing strategy by the president, but there is little they can do as a result presidential dominance in foreign policy as well as partisan polarization.

In the recent acts of bellicosting and posturing, the U.S. seems more inclined to use force against Iran, a move that is geared towards satisfying domestic as well as international allies (Saudi and Israel) more than geared towards the strategic interest of the U.S.

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