

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE

FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD

Institut mezinárodních studií

Rudolf Rudyšar

Foreign policy of Obama administration towards Iran

Diplomová práce

Praha 2016

Table of Contents

Introduction7

1. Theoretical framework13

2. Current development in the area18

 2.1 U.S. Interests, Objectives, and Strategies19

 2.2. Iran's Interests, Objectives, and Strategies22

3. Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs28

 3.1 A Short History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue28

 3.2 The P5+1 Format31

 3.3 Could Iran build a nuclear bomb if it chooses to?37

4. U.S. Policy Approaches39

5. Possible Regional Implications45

 5.1 The U.S. strategic allies46

 5.2 The threats facing the United States51

Conclusion55

References59

Autor práce: **Bc. Rudolf Rudyšar**

Vedoucí práce: **doc. PhDr. Francis Raška, Ph.D.**

Rok obhajoby: 2016

Abstract

Diplomová práce Politika Obamovy administrativy vůči Íránu se zabývá analýzou sbližování Spojených států a Íránu za vlády současného prezidenta Baracka Obamy. V tomto kontextu se práce zabývá zejména vztahy s dalšími americkými spojenci v regionu (zejména Izraelem a Saudskou Arábií) a jejich vlivem na schopnost USA prosadit své zájmy na Blízkém východě bez ohledu na své regionální spojence. Diplomová práce je rozdělena do pěti kapitol, přičemž první kapitola stanovuje teoretický rámec, který je dále v práci použit při analýze diskutovaných problémů. Druhá kapitola se zabývá nedávným geopolitickým vývojem v regionu zejména v kontextu signifikantních vln nestability, které Blízký východ zasáhly. Třetí kapitola podrobně rozebírá vývoj kolem íránského jaderného programu a věnuje se zejména jaderné dohodě mezi USA a Íránem, kterou obě strany uzavřely v polovině roku 2015 a která je považována za zlomový dokument v oblasti mezinárodního přístupu k íránskému jadernému programu. Čtvrtá a pátá kapitola pak analyzují postupy a přístupy Obamovy administrativy k jednotlivým problémům na Blízkém východě a podrobně analyzují vztahy s klíčovými blízkovýchodními spojenci USA. Diplomová práce uzavírá danou problematiku konstatováním, že skutečně došlo k nespornému sbližení USA a Íránu, nelze tento trend považovat za ohrožení dlouhodobých aliancí s Izraelem a Saudskou Arábií.

Abstract

The master thesis' main goal is to analytically evaluate Obama's policy towards Iran in the context of the process of rapprochement between the two countries. In this context, the issue of relations with key US allies (specifically Israel and Saudi Arabia), with regard to the possibility of the United States enforcing its security interests in the region, regardless of their allies is especially important. The thesis is divided into 5 parts. The first part puts up theoretical framework using the approach of realism that is later used to analyze important aspects of the discussed problem. The second chapter describes current development in the area in the context of recent waves of instability in the MENA region. The third chapter describes in detail the context of Iran nuclear program its development in recent years and most importantly the nuclear deal that was struck in the middle of the year 2015. Chapter four analyzes U.S. policy approaches in the discussed time period in the context of its important alliances and also in the context

of the recent development in the region. The last chapter thoroughly examines how significant were the geopolitical changes and changes in relations between the United States and Iran and also how much influence did these changes have regarding the alliances with Saudi Arabia and Israel. The thesis concludes that despite warming relations between the United States and Iran, the alliances between the United States and Saudi Arabia and Israel respectively are deeply rooted in U.S. foreign policy paradigm and are not going to be negatively affected as to create the change of alliances.

Klíčová slova

Americká zahraniční politika, Spojené státy americké, Írán, jaderný program, realismus, spojení

Keywords

U.S. foreign policy, uprising, the United States, Iran, nuclear program, realism, alliance

Počet znaků

118.323 znaků

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval/a samostatně a použil/a jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.

Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného titulu.

Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne 12. května 2016 Rudolf Rudyšar

Introduction

Even though Barack Obama was elected as a candidate who placed emphasis primarily on domestic political agenda and therefore, he did not appear so interested in foreign policy at the beginning of his presidency, turbulent developments in the Middle East forced the current American president to rethink his foreign policy priorities. Obama was forced by circumstances to become more active in the Middle East than he originally intended. Unlike his predecessor, the current president chose a considerably more diplomatic approach in line with his foreign policy doctrine and the effort to significantly reduce American involvement in the MENA.¹ This puts into perspective Obama's pursuit of a diplomatic solution to the problematic relationship with Iran and a certain redefinition of allied ties in the region, which suffers from a lack of dynamism and capacity to take action on account of their long-term nature. In MENA there are changes happening over the last years, some of which are objectively irreversible, despite the efforts of external actors. Especially those changes that have a demographic and geographic character, such as the rise of the Shiite branch of Islam or the emancipation of the Kurdish population in some states.

From a geopolitical framework Iran is one of the key Middle Eastern players with the ability to influence events in other MENA countries through its regional allies. But the most conflictive topic in recent years has become the issue of Iran's nuclear program and suspicions that Iran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon, which led to the imposition of a number of international sanctions. However their effect on the Iran's ability to continue its nuclear program is debatable. Convergence between the United States and Iran can not be attributed just to Obama's pursuit of a diplomatic solution to conflicts in the MENA region, as the global geopolitical situation, especially the civil war in Syria and the campaign against the Islamic State, made the United States and Iran temporary allies, which obviously contributed to an increased willingness for mutual concessions. An important moment of rapprochement between the two countries was also the election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian President, since this politician is generally considered as a representative of the moderate branch of the Iranian political scene, which was confirmed shortly after his election, when there was a historic

1 LYNCH, Marc. *Obama and the Middle East: Rightsizing the U.S. Role*.
URL<<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/obama-and-middle-east>>

phone conversation with President Obama (this was the first contact between senior representatives of the two countries since 1979).²

The pursuit of a diplomatic solution to the situation and the concessions towards Iran that Obama has made, were also met with significant criticism. In geopolitical terms the rapprochement with Iran raised concern among the two largest US MENA allies, both Israel and Saudi Arabia. Israel has been a key US ally and protege for a long time, it considers Iran's nuclear program a direct threat to its existence and is one of the biggest supporters of a forceful solution to the Iranian problem. Saudi Arabia leads a long battle with Iran for regional hegemony, which is further compounded by a general conflict between Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam. American rapprochement with Iran potentially threatens Saudi interests in the region, particularly in the context of the civil conflict in Syria.

At the outset of this thesis, I would like to focus on the key local definition, which I will be working with through this paper. Since the thesis operates more or less exclusively with the term MENA, I think at this point it necessary to define the term more accurately. The concept of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) from a geographical and geopolitical point of view has a wide range of definitions and even the individual components of the US government do not use this term consistently. The State Department uses the term Near East (indicating an area stretching from Iran to Morocco, including the Arabian Peninsula and the entire Arab North Africa),³ while the Office of the United States Trade Representative uses the label Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for the same area. The notion of MENA is also widely used in professional literature, as it is the most appropriate designation of these geopolitically connected areas. Especially in recent years, due to the cultural and economic connections and the added political interconnection (thanks to the revolutions of the Arab Spring), this whole area can be considered geopolitically connected. For this reason I will be using the term MENA in my thesis to indicate the aforementioned geographic area.

The aim of of this paper is to analytically evaluate Obama's policy towards Iran in the context of the process of rapprochement between the two countries. In this context, the issue of relations with key US allies (specifically Israel and Saudi Arabia), with regard to the possibility of the United States enforcing its security interests in the region, regardless of their allies is especially important. In other words, I want to focus on the way the disintegration of relationships with key allies could strengthen or restrict the ability of the United States to

² O'BRIEN, Michael, CHUCK, Elisabeth. *Obama and Rouhani make history with phone call, thawing three decade freeze between US and Iran*. URL <<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/obama-rouhani-make-history-phone-call-thawing-three-decade-freeze-f8C11279459>>

³ *Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: Introduction*. URL <<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/>>

enforce their interests in MENA, or how this may have an impact on the overall security situation in the area. From the foregoing, the key question of this paper is: *Can the loosening of the strong bonds between the United States and its key allies in the MENA region, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel, limit the ability of the United States' to enforce their interests in MENA, and could this situation possibly lead to larger geopolitical changes in the region?*

While writing this dissertation I set the following hypothesis: *Given the long term nature of today's key alliances between the United States and its MENA allies, the progressing disintegration of these alliances poses a great risk to the interests of the United States, especially in the long run. However, current rapprochement with Iran, is not so crucial as to challenge roots of such long alliances. On the other hand the potential restrictions on the ability of the United States to achieve its objectives in the MENA region, threatens the overall geopolitical stability of the region, which could experience significant safety risk changes in the future.* In this hypothesis I rely on various sources including also the views of Israeli analysts and experts close to the Israeli discourse, because I believe that it is Israel who plays a key role in shaping US foreign policy in MENA in the long run and that the development of this alliance, specifically its changes, may be crucial for further development in the region. I am of course aware that focusing on Israeli discourse implies a certain concession at the expense of the objectivity of the final output, but my goal is to outline this part of the spectrum during its placement into the overall context. In addition to the Israeli and American secondary sources I have used many other sources that supply the thesis with a broader context (more details on the resources and literature below).

This thesis is based on a qualitative research and draws upon an empirical-analytic approach. When creating the text I used a descriptive method in specific passages, in cases where to have a good understanding of the mentioned phenomenon it was necessary to describe the general circumstances in greater detail. In terms of research design it is an disciplined interpretive study which is a special type of a unique case study. A case study as such serves for deeper understanding of the selected case and such a characteristic indicates that it is qualitative methodology. It presents a detailed analysis of the case, which was chosen as the research subject. Its aim is to provide a deep understanding or a causal explanation of the selected case. It must take into account the overall context of events (social, political,

historical) and also provide a comprehensive image.⁴ An equally important factor is the pursuit of a holistic view of the chosen issues with the help of contextual logic.

In seeking answers to the above research questions I will use available documents of American, Israeli and Iranian origin as the primary sources, and as a secondary source I will use professional literature. The basic primary sources are the statements of President Obama, as presented in the official documents of the White House, or as they appeared in the relevant media (in newspapers or other press agencies). Likewise, I also used Israeli and Iranian media when there were versions available in English.

Regarding secondary sources, I used articles from professional journals and a number of book titles. To determine the theoretical framework I used the classics of realpolitik thinking. In the first place it is necessary to mention the work Morgenthau,⁵ which pins one of the key theoretical paradigms of this work, the theory of balance of power. This theoretical framework has proven to be particularly useful for sub-analyzes of individual allied ties in the MEDA. Basically, all the points that Morgenthau stated as the main characteristics of his balance-of-power theory, could be implemented on the examined issues. In terms of safety issues the presented thesis is based on the results of the so-called Copenhagen School, which has a crucial influence on the current security studies in general. In the works of Buzan, Wilde and Waever⁶ The Copenhagen School offered a comprehensive framework for expanding the research agenda of security studies. In addition to the securitization, the core concept is the sector approach to security. Other important authors for establishing the theoretical framework are Pavel Barša and Ondrej Císař, who together with theoretical research of conflict and a general approach to the study of conflict deal with predicting the development in the MENA region in their book *Anarchy and order in world politics*.⁷ For a thorough explanation of the selected topics with the theory of international relations, Drulák⁸ also contributed to the study, he brings forward the claim that the state is the most important player on the global field. Other actors, such as international organizations are either instruments of states or are considered to be insignificant in relation to the major issues of international relations.⁹

⁴ KOŘAN, Michal. *Jednopřípadová studie*, pg. 33.

⁵ MORGENTHAU, Hans J. a THOMPSON, Kenneth W., ed. *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*.

⁶ BUZAN, Barry, de WILDE, Jaap, WAEVER, Ole. *Bezpečnost: Nový rámec pro analýzu*.

⁷ BARŠA, Pavel a CÍSAŘ, Ondřej. *Anarchie a řád ve světové politice*.

⁸ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*.

⁹ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 55.

As a source for approaching the Iranian context I took the work of Jakob Rigi¹⁰ on Iran on the road between democracy and dictatorship. Rigi describes the situation in Iran in the selected period. I got some thought-provoking information about contemporary Iran from the texts of Iranian-American political scientist Trita Parsi.¹¹ Given the status and political history of the author it can be assumed that some of his views and analytical considerations may be slightly biased. As president of the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) and years of eagerly trying to mend relations between Washington and Tehran, he was a supporter of the agrément that the US has entered into with Iran on the nuclear issues.

In examining the relations between Iran, the United States and Israel, among other things, I relied on the work of American experts on international relations Dana Allin and Steven Simon.¹² The authors describe the five crisis periods that occurred in the MENA region after World War II (the Suez crisis of 1956, the Arab-Israeli wars - from Six Day to Yom Kippur 1967 to 1973, the Iranian revolution. 1979 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and 9/11 2001) They suggest that now is the period of the sixth MENA crisis, which the Obama Administration faces.

Besides the primary sources a number of reports published by the Congressional Research Service inform about the latest developments in US-Iranian relations. Kenneth Katzman is the author of many cited congressional reports concerning Iran and MENA, and an expert on MENA issues. He served in the US government as an analyst on Gulf issues, with special emphasis on Iran and Iraq. The answers to the question on the purpose of the possession of nuclear bombs, which I analyze in the thesis in relation to the possible existence of an Iranian nuclear weapon, is mainly based on the older, but still very useful text by Scott Sagan,¹³ and we will find considerations on Saudi Arabia's nuclear armament in the text of renowned experts in the field and former employees of the IAEA Olli Heinonen and Simon Henderson.¹⁴

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the theoretical framework. The basic theoretical concept that I used in this thesis, is the principle of realpolitik. In the second part of this work is the current development in the area, which briefly summarizes important clues as to the current US presence in MENA and the interests that America has in the region. This section also summarizes a brief overview of the situation

¹⁰ RIGI, Jakob. *Iran at the crossroads of democracy and dictatorship*.

¹¹ PARSI, Trita. *A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*.

¹² ALLIN, Dana; SIMON, Steven. *The sixth crisis: Iran, Israel, America, and the rumors of war*.

¹³ SAGAN, Scott D. *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb*.

¹⁴ HEINONEN, Olli, HENDERSON, Simon. *Nuclear Kingdom: Saudi Arabia's Atomic Ambitions*.

in Iran, which is needed to complete the overall context. The third chapter deals with the Iranian nuclear program as a critical area of friction between Iran and the United States, and as an important trigger for the disintegration of relationships between the United States and its regional allies. In chapter four, US Policy Approaches, I examine the current Obama Administration's stance towards Iran, while also briefly outlining Obama's views on the issues of MENA, that have been presented since his election into the presidential office. The purpose of this section is to highlight the evolution of US-Iranian relations in the context of regional alliances and also in the context of geopolitical developments in the region. The last chapter is called Possible Regional Implications and its goal is to analytically evaluate the effects of the developments which we have described in the previous chapters on the existence and dynamics of US alliances in the region. Part of this section is a brief prediction of potential geopolitical developments in the region, particularly with regard to further progress in the relations between the United States and its key allies.

In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I have applied the approach in accordance with the theoretical framework of realist theory, which is described in more detail in Chapter 1. Realism essentially rejects any idealistic assumptions and fundamentally resists predictions of the future. It concentrates only on the past and present, describes and evaluates the events that already took place ("the world as it is".) The fifth chapter of this thesis, which includes, a brief prediction of possible development, is thus somewhat in conflict with the realist theoretical framework (which forbids any consideration on the future development), although as a basis for the prediction I used the realist proposition that the interests and identity of the state are persistent and determined in advance. When considering the possible regional implications of Obama's MENA policy, I built on the Copenhagen School, which has a crucial influence on contemporary security studies and I compiled the fifth chapter on the theoretical foundations of of this school's security theses, respectively realist Barry Buzan and his associates.

1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis is built on the concept of realism, especially on the work of Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations 15*, its basis is the idea that the principle of the international system is the balance of power, which is the essential stabilizing factor in the community of sovereign national states. I then inserted the individual events and the evolution of American Iranian relations in the assessed period into this theoretical framework, including the implications that these developments may have on the future. The reason for choosing this theoretical concept is the fact that the influence of realist theory in international relations is the strongest in the long-term, despite the shortcomings that realism has been widely criticized for. In addition to this, American foreign policy in MENA leans towards realist policy, so for this reason it is appropriate to use the theoretical concept of realism.

The realist approach was developed mainly in the United States after 1945 in response to the international political chaos of the interwar period, the Second World War and the outbreak of the Cold War.¹⁶ It is a theory that is logically and structurally defined and abounds with strong internal cohesion.¹⁷ The principle of realism is based on the hypothesis that conflict and competition between the different actors (for which they only considered individual states rather than international organizations, etc.¹⁸) of international political events is natural and has its basis precisely in the international political structure. The existence of the nation state is the basic building block of international politics. The key terms of realist theory are balance of power, expansion of power and the creation of coalitions against hegemony. Realist political analysis of political events is based on innate human nature, which measures the nature of politics in international relations and whose functioning justifies the creation of these relationships.¹⁹ The main actors in international relations, the national states, operate in a variably anarchic environment that is potentially very conflicting because of the uncertainty caused by the security dilemma. The reflection of this theoretical paradigm is particularly evident in the MENA, because there are a lot of variable actors and there is significant instability in the geopolitical environment.

¹⁵ MORGENTHAU, Hans J. *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*.

¹⁶ KISSINGER, Henry. *Umění diplomacie*, pg. 55.

¹⁷ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 54.

¹⁸ A substantial part of the realist theory is its opposition to international organizations that are just a tool, through which some of the actors pursue their own interests.

¹⁹ PŠEJA, Pavel. *Přehled teorií mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 18.

International policy is derived from the constant struggle for power, because each state is trying to expand at the expense of the other. In this concept, power, decisiveness and speed of action play a major role, as this always has the upper hand over discussions, compromise and efforts to reach an agreement.²⁰ The concept of state interests is defined by the particular state's power, and this power can be understood as military, technological, informational, but it can also simply form a seemingly demonstrated feeling of power and superiority, respectively it can lead the other party to an irrational unjustifiable fear. The main emphasis is put on the concept of security as the protection of the existence of the state against the threat from another state.²¹ The main focus is the state that is able to clearly define their states "national" interest, which is independent from the current political representation and leading elites.

Within the realist paradigm of international relations *power* belongs among the crucial concepts. The source of power is strength, and military force is the most important material source of state power in international relations. According to Morgenthau, there are eight other sources of power - geographical location, natural resources, industrial base, military preparedness, population, national character, determination and perseverance of the nation and the quality of diplomacy. Neorealist Kenneth Waltz comes up with a different definition of power. According to him, power is accumulated with the following factors: the size of territory and population, resources, economic power, military force, political stability and authority (competence).²² While Morgenthau prefers soft power components, such as national character, determination and perseverance of the nation or the quality of diplomacy, Waltz's definition of power is predominantly materialistic. However power also has an immaterial dimension, which is represented by political stability and competence.

The benefit of this type of definition is that from an academic point of view, power can be measured (assuming we operationalize the individual elements). However it should be noted, that in the past and even now, there are many cases where states which, according to one or the other definition should be powerful, but fail to achieve their desired objectives or to leave a mark. This logically means that power and influence on the international political scene is influenced by factors other than just those mentioned in the definitions of power, so the theoretical framework can not always be strictly applied to the resulting geopolitical realities.

²⁰ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 55.

²¹ BARŠA, Pavel, ČÍSAŘ, Ondřej, *Anarchie a řád*, pg. 66; BUZAN, Barry, WÆVER, Ole, DE WILDE, Jaap, *Bezpečnost*, pg. 31.

²² WALTZ, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*, pg. 131.

Kenneth Waltz also developed the classical theory of balance of power. If one state is somehow strengthened, other states and groups will create an alliance against them. Waltz distinguishes bipolar and multipolar structure, and he deemed the bipolar arrangement to be more stable than the multipolar structure. According to Waltz it is not the primary objective to maximize the power of the state, but to maximize safety.²³ But we must mention that Waltz and his theory of balance of power do not offer an innovative concept in comparison with Morgenthau – an innovative concept was introduced by Stephen Walt and his theory of balance of threats.²⁴

This theory is based on several premises. Power itself does not automatically mean the risk of aggression and the most powerful state may not be the one that poses the greatest risk of attack. Therefore it is not necessary for the smaller states to "counterbalance" the most powerful state. According to Walt's theory states balance threats rather than power. Power is just one of the criteria by which to determine whether the state is a threat. According to Walt, there are two possible responses to the threat - balancing or bandwagoning. Balancing means joining in with the opposition to the main source of danger. Conversely bandwagoning means joining the state, which represents the greatest danger, a behavior that opposes the traditional theory of balance of power. Walt assumes that power attracts states, and thus the stronger the state, the more likely that the others will want to become its allies. On the other hand, if there is a drop in its relative position it is all the more likely that the allies will prefer neutrality or switch to the side of the opponent. Walt's reworking of the classical theory of balance of power and the formulation of the theory of balance of threats has greater potential to realistically explain specific examples in practice. Walt's theory has successfully avoided the problem of the hardly feasible measurement of power.

Realism as such has not only a theoretical, but also a normative element. Political reality is full of events from whose observation we can draw the general rules and models for the behavior of the actors (states) in international politics. Realism essentially models a pattern of behavior, which is a kind of normative theoretical construct. It assumes that rational foreign policy is correct and effective, if it minimizes risk and maximizes the profit of the countries that pose as actors in the situation. The conduct of the actors should therefore be guided by the precautionary principle and take into account the achievement of the objectives. In other words, the realist theory describes the causes and consequences of the actions of individual actors and focuses on the interaction among them within the international political

²³ The same.

²⁴ WALT, Stephen. *Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power*, pg. 3 – 43.

system, but can not predict the particular way in which the actors react to external pressures, and what means they use.

Realism's emphasis on "reality" is based on rationality, which also entails the rejection of the moral dimension of international relations, since according to the realists moral arguments are only facades for the power interests of individual countries.²⁵ International politics are characterized by a constant struggle for power, security, and the promotion of their own national interests. However it's a zero sum game, because it all takes place in an environment which is characterized by instability and the absence of central authority. The gain of one party is viewed by the other parties as a threat or loss.

If we try to apply the above mentioned theoretical concepts to the realities of the MENA region, we will come to several partial findings. The duel for power in MENA, as defined earlier in this chapter takes place on several levels, as we have more players pursuing their interests, on the one hand the United States and also regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. A specific regional player is Israel, which in the opinion of many experts, is performing the role of an American satellite, but in recent decades has become an increasingly more independent player. In the MENA, the premise of strengthening a private position and interest of one actor in the international political relations at the expense of others often, takes place in the form of proxy conflicts when the powerful actors project their interests through actors in the conflicts. An ideal example is the Syrian civil war, where there are now several proxy conflicts, through which both the United States and the regional actors are trying to promote their interests in the region.²⁶

If we look at current events in the MENA through the lens of the components of power as defined by Morgenthau or Waltz, we logically come to the conclusion that under both definitions, Iran has very good potential to become a regional player with great power, because it combines powerful aspects of geographic location, natural resources and political stability relative to the regional situation. Iran does not have any close allies from the ranks of the global powers, respectively it does not have any of the world powers as a strong and close ally similar to the dynamic between Israel and the United States, which makes it relatively less dependent on great-power interests and gives it more room for maneuvering when promoting their own interests in the region.

²⁵ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*, pg. 61; BUZAN, Barry, de WILDE, Jaap, WAEVER, Ole. *Bezpečnost*, pg. 31.

²⁶ *Syria: Proxy war, not civil war*. URL

<<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150314-syria-proxy-war-not-civil-war/>>

The great potential of Iran in terms of accumulation of power might potentially be a strong endangering factor for Saudi Arabia and Israel, who, according to the above definitions of power also have plenty of power potential, they are much more dependent on the United States (this applies significantly more to Saudi Arabia than to Israel²⁷). Given the strong power status of all three states in the region and their conflicting interests we can see Iran, through the Israeli and the United States optics, as extremely threatening to the potential power interests of Israel and Saudi Arabia. Especially in the case of the loosening of the alliance between the United States and its allies in favor of Iran.

If you connect this to Walt's theory of balancing the threats we will come to a partial conclusion that the strengthening of Iran might work to attract new potential allies, which will further enhance their potential for regional hegemony. On the other hand, it should be noted that in the context of the MENA region we have seen a number of other aspects, particularly religious and ethno-cultural, that would very likely disrupt the theoretical vision of Walt's theory. The same applies to Israel, which, although it is a strong player in the MENA region, for logical reasons it does not attract many new regional allies and conversely is considered a major regional threat by the other regional players.

Finally, it is necessary to say that the realist theory paradigm and its constituent units should be seen as a theoretical framework, and we can not literally apply all the knowledge and details on the highly complex geopolitical realities of the MENA region that are influenced by a range of other aspects.

²⁷ HUBBARD, Ben. *Despite Displeasure With U.S., Saudis Face Long Dependency*. URL <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/persian-gulf-allies-confront-crisis-of-confidence-in-us.html?_r=0>

2. Current development in the area

„For decades, the United States has pursued a set of core interests in the region: countering terrorism and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons; securing the free flow of commerce and safe-guarding the security of the region; standing up for Israel’s security and pursuing Arab-Israeli peace. We will continue to do these things.“²⁸ During Obama's Presidency a wide range of turbulent events and changes happened in MENA that significantly affected the United States' position in the region. As a result of the Arab Spring a power vacuum was created in the area, which provided a possibility for regional powers, including Iran, to strengthen their position of power. The relative weakening of the influence of the United States²⁹ along with the abrupt rise of radical Islamism (especially the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) resulted in a convergence of interests of the United States and Iran. When in September 10, 2014, President Obama announced the strategy to „degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL”,³⁰ Minister Kerry said on September 19 at the UN that Iran also can contribute to the fight against IS.³¹ A similar objective in this matter was also presented by the Iranian president Rouhani.³²

Obama's effort to create the broadest coalition possible against Islamic radicals from the Islamic State was also met with the criticism of a number of prominent personalities of world diplomacy. Henry Kissinger reacted to the problem by saying: „From a geo-strategic point of view, I consider Iran a bigger problem than ISIS. ISIS is a group of adventurers with a very aggressive ideology. But they have to conquer more and more territory before they can become a geo-strategic, permanent reality. I think a conflict with ISIS – important as it is – is more manageable than a confrontation with Iran.“³³ Cooperation with Iran to solve major regional conflicts such as the war in Syria and Iran, logically leads to a strengthening of its position in MENA, because Iran gets a unique opportunity to promote part of their interests in other countries in the MENA region due to the cooperation with the United States.

²⁸ OBAMA, Barack. *Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa*. May 19, 2011.

²⁹ KINZER, Stephen. *Iran, the Saudis, and the new “Great Game”*.

³⁰ OBAMA, Barack. *We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL*. 10 Sept. 2014. ISIL (IS)– Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

³¹ John KERRY: “There is a role for nearly every country to play, including Iran.” *Bliž viz Kerry builds support at the UN for anti-IS coalition*. URL <<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/kerry-builds-support-at/1371824.html>>

³² *Terrorism cannot be eradicated by military action*. Islamic Republic of Iran’s Presidency website. Sept 25, 2014.

³³ Cit. podle Henry Kissinger: *Iran 'A Bigger Problem Than SIS'*. Huffington Post, 9 Jun 2014.

2.1 U.S. Interests, Objectives, and Strategies

The basic principles of US foreign and security policy are contained in the *National Security Strategy* (NSS),³⁴ which was published in 2010. The existence of the so called Islamic State, an important player in Middle East, is logically not included, however, the principles of US MENA policy are fundamentally unchanged by its existence. Long-term US policy goals in MENA cover a wide range of areas.³⁵ It is primarily the support of traditional US ally Israel and the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The alliance of the United States and Israel is a long term key concern for both parties, especially the Israeli use of American aid to further its interests in the region which is otherwise very unfriendly towards the Jewish state. However in recent years internal political criticism has focused on the fact that in the long-term the alliance with Israel is tarnishing the image of the US among Arab allies, whose inclination is towards a stable MENA region and the ability of the United States to enforce their interests is also very important.³⁶ The United States alliance with Israel is Israel's most valuable national security asset. Israel's government almost always relied on its special relationship with the United States (and on American money) under the American perception of Israel as a like-minded democracy.³⁷ Obama worked with the idea that if there is a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it will improve US relations with Arab states.³⁸

Given that from the beginning of his first term in office Obama actively tried to improve the US image in MENA, this logically led to a slight criticism of Israeli policy, which was unprecedented during President Bush's term.³⁹ Obama's effort to lessen

³⁴ According to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986 (Section 50 USC § 404A - Annual National Security Strategy Report), the president must submit a report on the national security strategy of the United States in Congress every year. The Clinton administration comply with this provision, Bush Jr. presented for his two seasons only two versions of The Strategy (2002 and 2006), Obama submitted the only SAC in 2010. This is a strategic document and the relevant key topics are discussed generally. More than realistic it is a declaratory document. Such an approach from the creative strategies can be assessed as quite logical; if the document is to determine the long-term or medium-term security and foreign policy of the United States - for such a horizon would have reflected the fact that in recent years the strategy updated, not every year, but within two or three years - it is necessary to set the basic framework for free in order to in them as needed to move.

³⁵ ARIEFF, Alexis, et al. *Change in the Middle East*, pg. 3–4.

³⁶ MEARSHEIMER, John J., WALT, Stephen. *Israeli Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Public Lecture available at URL <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzXS3tmZrcU>>

³⁷ For the development of relations the US and Israel see in more detail and more comprehensively see: BURKETT, Elinor. *Golda*.

³⁸ PEDATZUR, Reuven. *How Obama changed the paradigm of U.S.–Israel relations*.

³⁹ The White House. *Remarks by President Obama and Prime minister Netanyahu of Israel in press availability*.

involvement in the region and his affinity for diplomatic solutions, coupled together with the above mentioned changes in the turbulent region in turn led to efforts by the US president to soften the edges of the tense relations with Iran. The combination of these two factors gives the impression that Obama is moving away from a long-term American ally in favor of improving relations with states that previously were not very forthcoming towards American interests.

Among the key US interests in the long term is also the detention of Iranian influence in the region, both through a direct non-military confrontation, and the support of Saudi Arabia and Israel, the largest regional rivals of Iran. Overall Iran has been a „thorn in the side“ for US interests in recent years - on one hand its non-transparent nuclear program, which repeatedly became the target of nuclear sanctions and during the Bush administration also led to numerous considerations of military action against Iran, and by supporting militant groups in other countries in MENA (mainly Hamas and Hezbollah).

The Obama administration's diplomatic approach is the logical result of the geopolitical situation in the region and the president's foreign policy ambitions and attitudes. As demonstrated earlier, an extremely tough approach in promoting American interests may be counterproductive in the long term. Sanctions⁴⁰ from the international community can unite Iranian public opinion in a negative attitude towards the rest of the world and also increase domestic support for nuclear ambitions. Likewise, any military action against Iran by the United States or Israel would very likely lead to the strengthening of regional sympathy for the attacked country, because generally MENA public opinion has a strong negative attitude towards aggressive actions by Israel and the United States, especially after the experience with the rather unsuccessful execution of the second invasion of Iraq. It is also questionable whether any military action will be successful in preventing Iran from fulfilling its nuclear ambitions. The program could possibly be delayed for a few years, but it is likely that Iran would eventually succeed.⁴¹

The bigger picture of MENA geopolitics, however, is very complicated and the changes in the region in recent years have made the issues even more complex. US relations with Iran are very ambivalent. Saudi Arabia is a major American regional ally, and since 1979 Iran has been the largest regional adversary of the US. Saudi Arabia's biggest rival in taking control of the region is Iran. However Saudi Arabia, with its religious fundamentalism and

⁴⁰ See also: CORDESMAN, Anthony H.; WILNER, Alexander; KHAZAI, Sam. *US and Iranian Strategic Competition*.

⁴¹ ALLIN, Dana; SIMON, Steven. *The sixth crisis*, pg. 5–6.

Wahhabism is also, one of the ideological sources of Sunni jihadism against which the United States - and Iran - are fighting.⁴²

The last key interest of the United States which I will mention in this chapter, is energy security and the related alliance with Saudi Arabia. Although the United States is not as dependent on Middle Eastern oil as it was in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, Saudi Arabia remains a key player in global energy security and stability in the region. Moreover, reduced US dependence on Middle Eastern oil is rather relative. The United States is the world's largest importer of energy.⁴³ Besides own production its main import countries are Canada and the OPEC countries.⁴⁴

During the presidency of George W. Bush Saudi Arabia was heavily favored, a US ally who was to be uncritically supported. Obama has diverted slightly from the Saudis during his eight year stay in the White House, but we still cannot talk about a fundamental shift in the perception of the overall geopolitical reality. Obama merely shifted the US position into middle ground, he tried to resolve unexpected situations in the region by dealing with all interested parties through diplomatic channels, even at the expense of the interests of some of his allies. It is of course questionable whether this shift will have an positive impact on the long term stability of the region and thus benefit US interests or if the departure from its allies will be revealed as a step in the wrong direction.

In conclusion to this part of the thesis it is fitting to add that the essence of American grand strategy lies in striving for a world where there is no danger to the fundamental American interests. Therefore, US policy must concentrate on shaping the international environment,⁴⁵ where these threats can be stopped. Gulf States, Israel and other regional states have their voiced concern over the fact that Iran will continue its support of international terrorism and that it will keep providing funds and weapons to a wide range of terrorist movements,⁴⁶ including the Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas (although Hamas ties with Tehran are tense because of the Syrian civil war), the government of Bashar Assad in Syria, the Iraqi Shiite militias and insurgents in Yemen. Iran has undoubtedly created policy opposing US

⁴² For more on this problematic see: BARŠA, Pavel. *Válka s Islámským státem*.

⁴³ In 2011, imports amounted to \$ 453.966 billion (the r. 2009, 271.798 billion USD, and r. 2010 355 056 000 000 USD), which makes this segment, the top US import commodity. *Energy Trade*. WILLIAMS, Brock R., DONNELLY, Michael J. *U.S. International Trade: Trends and Forecasts*, pg. 29.

⁴⁴ WILLIAMS, Brock R., DONNELLY, Michael J. *U.S. International Trade: Trends and Forecasts*, pg.

31.

⁴⁵ For his formation one can use traditional tools of a strategy "force, threat of force, diplomacy, economic pressure, psychological intervention deceit and more imaginative means", However also as international assistance and cooperation. see closer COLLINS, John M. *Military Strategy*, pg. 298.

⁴⁶ KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (2014), pg. 2.

interests in the region, but it is evident that existing procedures did not bring the expected effect and Iran was only partially restricted in their ability to enforce their interests. Diplomacy and the inclusion of Iran in solving regional problems could theoretically lead to greater stability in the region. As a shared responsibility for the developments in MENA, will logically push Iran to make certain concessions from its aggressive policy. President Obama has indeed expressed the same idea during a visit to Saudi Arabia in April 2016, when he declared that Saudi Arabia and Iran should share the MENA region.⁴⁷ Although the truth of this assertion is highly debatable it showcases Obama's efforts to find a solution for the MENA region. It would not only ensure the stability of the region, but also remove the United States from carrying some of the responsibility for maintaining this stability.

2.2. Iran's Interests, Objectives, and Strategies

Before we comprehensively analyze Iran's attitudes and interests, we must note that despite a number of simplifying labels, which the Iranian regime receives, it is not a classic dictatorship, but of course, it is not a democracy. Specifics on the Iranian political system do not belong in the context of this paper, it is nevertheless necessary to briefly reflect on the nature of the function of the Iranian political system. According to Jakob Rigi, the Islamic regime differs from a centralized dictatorship. „*Islamic regime of Iran different from both centralized dictatorships and liberal democracies. It emerged as an assemblage of multicentricdespotic oligarchies.*“⁴⁸ State and government institutions and their representatives act in the name of religion, which does not prevent them from partaking in the power struggle between the different oligarchic groups. „*The Iranian elections were always real but not democratic. They were not democratic because the nominees were filtered by the Guardian Council. They were real because different oligarchic factions competed for power through elections.*“⁴⁹ Elections are therefore perceived as a moment of change in the balance of power by foreign observers and their manipulation is hardly ever mentioned.

From a foreign policy perspective, the Islamic Republic considers the United States its main ideological and geopolitical foe. Iranian elite, particularly Khamenei, believe that the goal of the United States is to replace the Islamic political system with a secular pro-

⁴⁷ LANDLER, Mark. *Brack Obama says Saudi Araba needs to learn to share region with Iran*. URL <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Saudis-must-learn-to-share-region-with-Iran-Obama/articleshow/51348627.cms>>

⁴⁸ KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses* (2014), pg. 130.

⁴⁹ The same, pg. 131.

American regime. The conflict between Iran and the United States is not given just by objective geopolitical realities such as the Iranian nuclear program and support for militant organizations in other states of MENA, but also by an ideological aspect. Iranian religious representation, as well as a large part of the MENA public considers the influence of the United States to be culturally indoctrinating and therefore harmful for local culture and religion. This in conjunction with the unpopular steps the United States have taken in MENA in recent decades, shows a growing anti-Americanism, with added anti-Israeli sentiments. Which is due to the fact that the Jewish state is considered to be the biggest threat to stability in the region by the MENA public opinion and political representation.

In connection with the above, it is therefore logical that Iran became the ideological grub of anti-American and anti-Israeli forces and the source of funding, advice and weapons for various militant groups,⁵⁰ through which Iran extended its influence in the region. Iranian influence in the Middle East is also further compounded by the connectedness within the Shiite branch of Islam, which has seen an increase in both population and political influence in the region in recent decades. Currently Shias are a dominant force in Iraq, and also in Lebanon, they also have great influence on the regime of Syrian President Assad. Efforts to strengthen its position can be seen in Yemen and Bahrain. Shiite Islam is yet another powerful ideological weapon of Iran.

During the Presidency of George W. Bush, Iran was one of the main representatives of Bush's so called axis of evil, therefore, one of the countries that supports terrorism. Bush was a proponent of tough action against Iran, often stoking speculation about the imminent military action. Iranian response to such an approach by the United States was quite logically confrontational. This style was also helped by the fact that the Iranian president at the time was Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who acted relatively conservatively and did not show too much willingness to make concessions. However, the situation began to move towards a friendlier manner with the arrival of President Obama.

During the election campaign, Obama criticized the Bush Administration's foreign policy which according to him was based solely on the use of military force and he himself advocated the effective use of diplomatic, economic and political tools. Obama claimed that it was the wrong decision not to pursue direct talks⁵¹ with *rogue states*⁵² and said that if elected,

⁵⁰ DOBBINS, James et al. *Coping with a nuclearising Iran*, pg. ix.

⁵¹ „The notion that somehow not talking to countries is punishment to them – which has been the guiding diplomatic principle of this administration – is ridiculous.” Barack Obama, cit. by Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, July 31, 2007 (*Talking it out with enemies is often the best tactic*), during his presidential campaign, when he was a senator for Illinois. It is interesting to note that the other presidential candidate, just as he a member of the

direct negotiations with these countries would be initiated. Iran responded to Obama's statement after his election, when the new president received a letter from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad congratulating him,⁵³ among other things he spoke about hoping to improve US-Iranian relations.⁵⁴ Overall, Obama's approach was perceived positively in Iran, especially among Iranian reformists, who had hoped for a change in US-Iranian relations, moderate conservatives who generally advocate a non-confrontational approach in the interaction with the West. For example, Iranian Vice President Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaie commented on Obama's ascent to the presidency with the words: *„Mr Obama stands at a historically significant crossroads, but there are only two paths for him – one which leads to good results through 'change' as promised by his slogan, the other with extremely grave consequences if he continues the same policies as previous administrations“*⁵⁵ A similarly positive attitude was advocated by Ali Asghar Soltanieh, the Iranian representative in the International Atomic Energy Agency.⁵⁶ These positive moderate Iranian voices at the time of the Obama campaign could also be based on the hope that Obama's United States will allow Iran a place among the nuclear powers.⁵⁷

On the contrary radical and traditional Iranian conservative circles were skeptical of Obama's declaration of recognition. In contrast to these moderate conservatives circles those close to the Supreme Leader Khamenei sharply criticized Ahmadinejad for sending the letter to Obama, they argued that the power to set the framework for relations with the United States

Democratic Party, Hillary Clinton, responded to those words with a sardonic remark: *„irresponsible and frankly naive“*. (Clinton: *Obama 'Irresponsible and Naive'*). Obama was trying to differentiate himself from other presidential candidates, especially from Clinton, his main rival in the Democratic primary.

⁵² Iran, Syria and North Korea.

⁵³ *„On the Middle East.“* The Guardian, Saturday 8 Nov 2008; see also: KATZMAN, Kenneth. Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses (2010), pg. 8. President Ahmadinejad was known by conservative sentiments, religious fundamentalism, populism significant in domestic politics derogatory statements the Holocaust rhetorical attacks on Israel and the United States and the permanent and intensive support for Iran's nuclear program. The logical reason for changing the Ahmadinejad's trajectory over the last few months before the election of Barack Obama as president was Ahmadinejad's effort to distance himself somewhat from traditional conservatives (especially clergy) and strive to segment more of the popular vote (secular middle class), apparently due to the presidential election in 2009 - stylization into the role of peacemaker would have helped him in the elections and could possibly bring crucial votes. See, eg closer. YASIN, Kamal Nazer. *Iran: Reacting to Obama*. ISN, The International Relations and Security Network, ETH Zurich, Dec 3, 2008.

⁵⁴ *„The great Iranian nation welcomes real, fundamental and fair changes in behaviour and policies, especially in this region.“* Cit. podle *Mail bonding*. The Guardian, 8 Nov 2008.

⁵⁵ *„Mr Obama stands at a historically significant crossroads, but there are only two paths for him – one which leads to good results through 'change' as promised by his slogan, the other with extremely grave consequences if he continues the same policies as previous administrations.“* Cit. by *An Iranian official urges the US President-elect to distance himself from Washington's current stance towards Iran to implement his slogan*. PRESS TV, Tehran, Iran, Fri Nov 28, 2008.

⁵⁶ *Iran urges talks on equal footing*. PRESS TV, Tehran, Iran, Sun Nov 30, 2008.

⁵⁷ SAVYON, Ayelet. *Discussion in Iran on Possible Dialogue with U.S.*

belongs solely to the Supreme Leader.⁵⁸ Some voices in the Iranian leadership also drew attention to the considerable influence of the pro-Israel lobby on American foreign policy and the fact that it would be unwise to expect big changes from the Obama Administration.⁵⁹

In 2013 President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate and diplomatically inclined candidate was elected. This gave a green light to a gradual path to diplomacy. At the outset Rouhani indicated that he intends to choose a more moderate approach than was the case with his predecessor, he said: „*The Iran–US relationship is a complex and difficult issue. (...) In my view, the current state of affairs between Iran and the US cannot and should not remain forever. Extremists on both sides seem to be determined to perpetuate the situation of animosity and hatred between the two countries. However, common sense dictates a change in this trend with a view to opening a new chapter in this uneasy and challenging relationship to decrease enmity and mistrust. (...) As a moderate, I have a phased plan to deescalate hostility to a manageable state of tension and then engage in promotion of interactions and dialogue between the two peoples to achieve détente, and finally reach to the point of mutual respect that both peoples deserve.*“⁶⁰

Washington also responded to the shift in Iran's political scene and the election of President Rouhani. As a manifestation of the efforts to renew talks with Tehran over its nuclear program the US Congress approved the mitigation of some sanctions (related to health, agriculture and humanitarian aid)⁶¹ in the summer of 2013. Hereby giving the new president a chance to justify a change in his foreign policy approach on home soil. However there was an echo of criticism inside the United States against this decision. Which drew attention to the fact that foreign policy will remain largely determined by the ayatollah - who is not a fan of taking friendly steps, thus the easing of the sanctions is not appropriate.

During Obama's Presidency there was a gradual rapprochement between the states, even though there were some critical moments. The largest of them in 2011 was triggered by the leadership of the Iranian army when they threatened the closure of the Strait of Hormuz if

⁵⁸ That position is enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic - according to the Constitution is the Supreme Leader is responsible for the policy of Islamic Republic of Iran, ie. Indicates the direction of Iran's domestic and foreign policy.

⁵⁹ JAVEDANFAR, Meir. *Deconstructing Obama in Tehran*. 7 Nov 2008; YASIN, Kamal Nazer. *Iran: Reacting to Obama*; Messages in a similar way, however, are regularly published in Iran, was one of the last ones for example was in Iran report Press TV: *Congress under Israel lobby 'trying to stop Obama over Iran deal'*, Oct 21, 2014; see also similar attacks essentially an electronic version of the daily government hned newspaper Kayhan. A series of articles about alleged Zionist tendencies closely associatds of President Obama prepares the reader gradually to accept the hard line for a possible sharpening "of relations between the two countries.“

⁶⁰ REIFOWITZ, Ian. *President Obama Must Seize the Moment on Iran*. Huffington Post, Oct 23, 2013.

⁶¹ See for example. U.S. Eases Bite of Penalties Against Iran. The Wall Street Journal, July 25, 2013.

the US were to use it to return American warships into the Persian Gulf. This statement was rejected by the Iranian defense minister, and the question of whether Iran is able to effectively close the Strait of Hormuz has been questioned by military experts.⁶²

Obama's gradual pursuit of rapprochement between the two countries, through successive small steps, triumphed when the United States and rest of P5 + 1 managed to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program. According to its authors, this agreement prevented Iran from developing nuclear weapons, while also allowing it to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Technical details of the agreement are not important at this point (see the next section), but it is necessary to specify the basic parameters of the agreement. Iran pledged to reduce the number of centrifuges for uranium enrichment by two thirds and to get rid of 96% of its enriched uranium, which can be upgraded to the degree of enrichment usable in nuclear weapons. In return there will be a repeal of economic sanctions in 2015, when UN inspectors will certify that Iran is fulfilling the terms of the agreement. Iran will be able to reuse the global financial and banking system and sell oil to world markets. The arms embargo was given specific arrangements within the agreement and will be released slower.

Although worldwide the agreement was seen quite enthusiastically and it was also supported by the Iranian public.⁶³ With the majority of the world's politicians expressing the hope that the agreement will help improve stability and security in MENA and will also help integrate Iran back among the community of states. There was also some negative response. Mostly from Israel, who immediately declared it was not bound by the agreement, and also from the ranks of Republican opposition in the US Congress. Generally critics argued that the agreement does not prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, and in the long-term it might actually have an adverse result, as the lifting of the embargo will provide Iran with necessary resources. The agreement was not viewed positively by Saudi Arabia either, as it perceives the whole process of US-Iranian convergence very negatively.⁶⁴

The legitimacy of the concerns is currently quite difficult to speculate about, since the actual implementation of the agreement may take up to several years and the results, whether positive or negative will not be immediately visible. If the agreement is fulfilled, it is expected that it will contribute to a greater stability in the region. Iran, which will not be pushed against

⁶² CORDESMAN, Anthony H. Cordesman. *"Iran, Oil, and Strait of Hormuz,"* report for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2007, pg. 10.

⁶³ FARAHAT, Farshad. *The Iranian People's Reaction to the Nuclear Deal.* URL <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/farshad-farahat/hello-world-a-message-fro_b_7921796.html>

⁶⁴ HUBBARD, Ben. *Arab World Split Over Iran Nuclear Deal.* <<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/15/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-deal-provokes-sharp-reactions-across-the-arab-world.html>>

a wall by economic sanctions might be willing to make concessions on other controversial issues in the future, such as support of some regional militant groups. The dissatisfaction of Israel and Saudi Arabia was foreseeable due to their fears of the unsuccessful implementation of the agreement and the possibility of a nuclear Iran. On the other hand these states will not be satisfied even in the event of a successful implementation of the agreement and if a nuclear Iran would no longer exist as a geopolitical option. This whole process will logically increase Iran's influence in the region, which is very likely to happen at the expense of the influence of Saudi Arabia and at the expense of the security interests of Israel. It is expected that no matter how much the The United States and Iran cooperate, Iran will not get on board with the current direction of Israeli regional policy. It is of course a question of to what extent are current US interests in the region consistent with the interests of the biggest regional allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia. However it is clear that a confrontational approach without greater or of smaller concessions on both sides would logically lead to a military confrontation, which is absolutely undesirable for the United States.

3. Iran's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs

To better illustrate the Iranian nuclear issue, in this chapter I will briefly pursue the history of Iran's nuclear program and the points of controversy between Iran and the USA. The question of if and when Iran will obtain a nuclear weapon, has been the subject of debate for the duration of the search for a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. And it is still open, despite the closure of the nuclear agreement. American and especially Israeli analysts believe that unless there is a fundamental change in Iranian politics, there is a large possibility that sooner or later Iran will obtain a nuclear weapon.⁶⁵

3.1 A Short History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue

Iran's interest in nuclear technology dates back to the times of the Shah Reza Pahlavi, who showed interest in obtaining nuclear energy; Iran was to become a powerful modern state and atomic energy was part of the Shah's plan to modernize Iran. In 1957, he signed a civil agreement with the United States about cooperation and provision of technical assistance as well as several kilograms of enriched uranium.⁶⁶ Within the program *Atoms for Peace*⁶⁷ Tehran was given technical assistance, which culminated in the purchase of a 5MW reactor in 1967. In 1968 Iran signed the NPT and ratified it in 1970.⁶⁸ The NPT recognized Iran's right to build the reactor and enrich uranium to use as fuel as long as it will be within the limits of the treaty and will allow regular inspections. In 1974 the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI)⁶⁹ was founded and announced an ambitious plan to build 20 nuclear reactors.

For the Shah the signing of the NPT meant accelerating the negotiating treaties on nuclear technologies. In the years 1974-1977 they subsequently entered into agreements to

⁶⁵ DOBBINS, James et al. *Coping with a nuclearising Iran*, pg. iix.

⁶⁶ BURR, William. *A Brief History of U.S.-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations*, pg. 21.

⁶⁷ The US program, announced by President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the United Nations on December 8, 1953, on the use of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. The condition of participation in the program was that the participating countries permit inspections to ensure that nuclear materials are not used for military purposes. The program was officially founded in 1954, after approval by the Atomic Energy Act in the US, and ended in 1974 after the first Indian nuclear test.

⁶⁸ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT), signed on July 1, 1968 in New York, effective from March 5, 1970. May 11, 1995, the contract was extended for an indefinite period. Treaty provisions, in particular Article. VIII, para. 3, assume a review of the functioning of the treaty every five years. Three pillars of the agreement are (1) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, (2) Disarmament and (3) the civilian use of nuclear energy. See further United Nations / Treaties.URL <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>>

⁶⁹ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 308.

purchase nuclear technology, construction of nuclear reactors and to train specialists with Germany, France and the USA.⁷⁰ In the mid-70s Iran's nuclear ambitions were more than evident at this time. The Shah was quoted as saying that Iran will obtain nuclear weapons „without a doubt and sooner than one would think.”⁷¹ Weapons were seen by Iran as „that are seen as guaranteeing Iran's security.”⁷² According to documents unearthed in Tehran after the revolution, in the late 70s Iran and Israel discussed the possibility of adapting Israeli ground-ground rockets for Iranian use and equipping them with nuclear warheads. The documents describe the talks on the plan between Israeli and Iranian officials. If the monarchy had lasted longer, it is probable that Iran would have become a nuclear power.⁷³

After his rise to power, Khomeini refused the nuclear program, saying that it goes against the basic beliefs of Islam;⁷⁴ however in the mid-80s, he changed his mind. He decided to resume the nuclear program, with regard to the ongoing conflict with Iraq, among other things. The consequences of the war were devastating for Iran and forced the Supreme Leader to think about the renewal of the nuclear program as it would create a strong deterrent for other attacks by the unpredictable neighbor. After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in the late 80s, this approach was advocated by President Rafsanjani, who openly proposed the development of nuclear weapons. According to the IAEA report Iran's efforts to develop domestic gas centrifuges started in the mid-80s and foreshadowed the future direction of the state, that aimed for independence in the development of its nuclear program.

In 1990, Iran entered into a nuclear cooperation agreement with China and Russia and within another five years, signed a contract with Russia to complete the Bushehr reactor. China stopped cooperation with Iran due to pressure from the United States.⁷⁵ In the mid-90s the United States suspected that Iran was adjusting its reports for the IAEA in an effort to expand their nuclear program by a military component, and so they pressured the Russian Federation to terminate its obligations towards Iran.⁷⁶ These concerns were subsequently the reason for the imposition of sanctions by the US and the withdrawal of potential suppliers of nuclear technology who were aware of the risks of a nontransparent Iranian nuclear program.

⁷⁰ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 308..

⁷¹ The same.

⁷² Podle words of George Tenet, the CIA director, who testified in Congress in early 2003. Cit. By *The World; Nuclear Ambitions Aren't New for Iran*. The New Your Times, June 22, 2003.

⁷³ The Same.

⁷⁴ „Nuclear weapons contradict the basic tenets of Islam.“ Cit. BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 309.

⁷⁵ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 309–310.

⁷⁶ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 309–310.

Concerns about possible violations of NPT obligations were confirmed in 2002, when information was revealed about the hitherto secret facilities at Natanz and Arak.⁷⁷ However, subsequent inspections by the IAEA, did not confirm or deny Iran's intentions of obtaining a nuclear weapon. In December of 2003 Iran implemented the Additional Protocol,⁷⁸ to allow the IAEA inspectors more detailed inspections of the installations.⁷⁹ Although inspections at the facility, did not prove the weaponization of atomic energy, doubts remained. The key issue is that Iran enriches its own nuclear fuel to a higher enrichment rate than is needed for energy or medical purposes.⁸⁰ In reaction to this we saw increased efforts by the international community to establish diplomatic negotiations to prevent Iran from developing these risk activities. The newly established group of three EU countries - Germany, France and Britain - began negotiations with Iran in 2003 with the aim of halting Iran's uranium enrichment.⁸¹ Representatives of the aforementioned European countries clarified that Iran should suspend uranium enrichment. Tehran, was in turn, assured that Europe will resist US pressure and continue the dialogue, they also offered a comprehensive package of economic incentives. This initiative was also supported by Javier Solano, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and was coordinated with the rest of the member countries through the EU Council. It became the main policy tool in the EU's efforts to deal with Iran.⁸²

In 2004, Iran signed the so-called Paris Agreement, which affirmed NPT obligations and expanded the range of activities that should be suspended from the nuclear program. Iran was to voluntarily give up all enrichment processes, especially the manufacture and import of gas centrifuges, but the contract would also allow Iran to develop nuclear technology for

⁷⁷ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 309–310.

⁷⁸ On the basis of Articles III. and IV. NPT IAEA has a key role in the program supervisory authority preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons. Concludes with individual Member States of bilateral agreements (Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements), on their basis the inspectors allowed entry to all declared nuclear facilities in those countries not owning nuclear weapons and non-military facilities in countries which own a nuclear weapon. This safeguard verification mechanism is in principle based on the political will of states to give their devices under control and thereby demonstrate the fulfillment of its obligations. This system is reinforced by so Additional Protocols (additional protocols, APs) to safeguards agreements between the Agency and its Member States Iran is implementing the Additional Protocol since December 2003, as if it has been ratified. See more: *International Atomic Energy Agency*, URL < <http://www.iaea.org> >

⁷⁹ IAEA. Communication dated 12 September 2005 from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency. INFCIRC/657. *Iranian Nuclear Policy & Activities Complementary Information To the Report of The Director General* (GOV/2005/67) 15 Sept 2005.

⁸⁰ Enrichment (ie. Increasing the proportion of U-235 isotope at the expense of the isotope U-238) of uranium to the level of LEU (Low Enriched Uranium) is a way to get nuclear fuel suitable for nuclear reactors. Uranium enrichment is done in two ways: in centrifuges (centrifuges) or gas diffusion plants. It is a complex process. Once the value of 20% enrichment, it is the HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium). Reaching 90% (which is a value sufficient for nuclear explosion) from the surface is 20% is already relatively simple; Enrichment is exponential, so you just have a disproportionately shorter period of time to achieve a higher level of enrichment

⁸¹ BAHGAT, Gawdat. *Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran*, pg. 311.

⁸² POSCH Walter. *The EU and Iran: a tangled web of negotiations*, pg. 102–103.

civilian purposes. It should be noted that despite the signed agreement Iran actively worked on missile development; if Iran had acquired a nuclear weapon it could have been used immediately.⁸³

In the Iranian presidential elections in June 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected; this election brought with it an important change, because the new president was a strong supporter of the Iranian nuclear program. In his speech before the UN General Assembly in September 2005 he declared that the NPT is discriminatory: „*The Islamic Republic of Iran, in its pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology, considers it within its legitimate rights to receive objective guarantees for uranium enrichment in the nuclear fuel cycle.*“⁸⁴ Tehran ended the implementation of the Additional Protocol, and once again began the uranium enrichment program.

3.2 The P5+1 Format

In addition to aforementioned European countries, the negotiations were also joined by the United States, China and Russia. (the so-called P5 + 1 group⁸⁵) They offered Tehran the provision of nuclear technology for civilian purposes if Iran approves and implements the Additional Protocol and will suspend uranium enrichment.⁸⁶ Tehran responded to this proposal in August 2006, they refused to suspend its activities related to uranium enrichment, but noted that the proposal contained „*useful foundations and capacities for comprehensive and long-term cooperation between the two sides.*“⁸⁷

⁸³ In 2004, Iran introduced the missile Shahab-3, which has a range of 1000 km and is thus able to attack targets in Israel and in southern Europe. When the show even one of these missiles bore the inscription "WIPE ISRAEL OFF THE MAP". These missiles are capable of carrying up to five hundred thousand-kilogram nuclear warhead. Shahab is name of the class of Iranian missiles, developed since 1988. There Shahab-1, Shahab-2, Shahab-3, Shahab-4, Shahab-5 and Shahab-sixth HENDEL, Yoaz. Iran's Nukes and Israele's Dilema. *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 1, Winter 2012, pg. 32.

⁸⁴ „*The Islamic Republic of Iran, in its pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology, considers it within its legitimate rights to receive objective guarantees for uranium enrichment in the nuclear fuel cycle.*“

AHMADINEJAD, Mahmood. *Address to the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*, pg. 9.

⁸⁵ Five UN Security Council members plus Germany.

⁸⁶ A proposal included the following main points: Suspension of all Iranian activities in the field of uranium enrichment and introducing a mechanism of checks, Iran once again join the Additional Protocol. The other party will provide light-water reactors, nuclear fuel for 5 years interim storage of fuel, suspend discussion of Iran's nuclear program in the UN Security Council will offer Iran cooperation in the field of civil aviation, telecommunications, high technologies and agriculture. see closer Arms Control Association. *History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue*. January 2014.

⁸⁷ SOFAER, Abraham D. *Taking on Iran*, pg. 75.

Having achieved virtually no progress during the negotiations, it was clear that discussions with Iran had come to an impasse.⁸⁸ Which prompted the Council of Governors of the IAEA to refer the case to the UN Security Council. In July 2006 the UN Security Council approved the Resolution 1696⁸⁹ with limited sanctions against Iran. It called for the suspension of uranium enrichment, a ban on international transfers of nuclear and missile technology to Iran and froze the foreign assets of twelve people and ten organizations, all actors in the Iranian nuclear program. Iran ignored this resolution, and Ahmadinejad announced an end to the cooperation with the the IAEA.

Several rounds of unsuccessfully negotiations took place in the years 2006-2010. In March 2008, the P5 + 1 group presented a revised proposal from June 2006, which coincided with the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1803. Iran countered with its own proposal, which included minimal details about possible solutions to the issue of its nuclear program. The P5 + 1 group presented its revised package during a June 2008 meeting in Tehran, followed by a meeting in July 2008 in Geneva; both ended unsuccessfully.

After his election, Obama, who tried to abandon his Republican predecessor foreign policy style, demanded that Iran comply with the requirements of the UN Security Council. Following Obama's election and a „whiff of fresh air“ the P5 + 1 group restored its negotiations with Iran. In April 2009, they released a statement in which five countries (without the USA) welcomed „*the new direction of U.S. policy towards Iran*“⁹⁰ and formally invited Iran to restore negotiations. Iran did not respond to this invitation until September, when Tehran issued a revised proposal. The proposal repeated several provisions from the 2008 proposal, but it did not contain any specific passages about the nuclear issue. Instead, it

⁸⁸ Cit. by POSCH Walter. *The EU and Iran: a tangled web of negotiations*, pg. 109-110.

⁸⁹ UN Security Council, Resolution 1696 (2006) Non-proliferation, 31 July 2006, S / RES / 1696 (2006). The UN Security Council adopted six resolutions in response to Iran's nuclear program. Council first demanded that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities with the adoption of Resolution 1696 in July 2006. The following three resolutions (adopted in December 1737 2006 1747 March 2007 March 2008 and 1803) contained sanctions against Iranian persons and entities involved to Iran's nuclear and missile programs. Resolution 1835, adopted in September 2008, reiterated demands that the resolution contained 1696. The UN Security Council has significantly expanded sanctions in June 2010 with the adoption of resolutions 1929thUN Security Council, Resolution 1696 (2006) Non-proliferation, 31 July 2006, S/RES/1696 (2006)

UN Security Council, Resolution 1737 (2006) Non-proliferation, 27 December 2006, S/RES/1737(2006)

UN Security Council, Resolution 1747 (2007) Non-proliferation, 24 March 2007, S/RES/1747(2007)

UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1803 (2008), 3 March 2008, S/RES/1803(2008)

UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1835 (2008), 27 September 2008, S/RES/1835 (2008)

UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 1929 (2010), 9 June 2010, S/RES/1929 (2010)

⁹⁰ „*the new direction of U.S. policy towards Iran*“, cit. podle Arms Control Association. *History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue*. January 2014.

dealt with cooperation on the tackling terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and piracy, and only proclamatively expressed support for the IAEA and the NPT treaty.

There was another round of negotiations, including discussions about an agreement under which Iran would send uranium enriched to 3.5% abroad and get uranium enriched to 20% for its medical research (medical isotopes) in the Tehran Research Reactor, there was no consensus on this issue either.

In 2011, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov submitted a draft protocol ("road map"), the American and Iranian sides both stated that they needed time for a thorough study of the proposal. The result was that the proposal was postponed and was never properly discussed. The P5 + 1 group and Iran resumed diplomatic talks in April, 2012 in Istanbul. Two further rounds of negotiations were held in May in Baghdad and in June in Moscow. In September 2012, the governors of the the IAEA approved an additional resolution towards Iran, the essence of which was to criticize Tehran for its refusal to conform to the requirements relating to uranium enrichment. It criticizes that Iran is not able to clarify suspicions about the nature of its nuclear activities and has failed to clearly prove the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. In 2013 another round of negotiations took place in Almaty (Kazakhstan); once again they failed to reach a consensus and no further meetings were scheduled.

Negotiations resumed in Geneva in October 2013. Iran was represented by a new negotiating team, headed by Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, who presented a new proposal during the negotiations. The new proposal outlined a broad framework for a comprehensive agreement and also introduced concrete steps for both sides. The Geneva Agreement (Joint Plan of Action⁹¹) openly acknowledged Iran's right to enrich uranium on its territory and the use of nuclear power for civilian purposes. It was concluded after the August inauguration of the newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, whose policy toward the US seemed to be more accommodating than that of his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The agreement only covered the six-month period of „*restoring trust*“⁹², the six-month period during which the dialogues would continue to try and settle on a final agreement. It also extended the stay of the UN inspection team in Iran for another six months.⁹³

Obama declared the agreement as „*the most significant and tangible progress*“⁹⁴ and has vowed to reciprocally veto any new sanctions against Iran if they are proposed by US

⁹¹ Joint Plan of Action. For the full deal see. *Full text of interim nuclear deal between Iran and six powers*. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

⁹² „*the deal was an opportunity for the West to restore trust with the Iranian nation,*“ Cit. by *Iran and world powers reach interim deal on nuclear program*. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

⁹³ See more: The White House: *First Step Understandings Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program*.(Nov 23, 2013)

lawmakers.⁹⁵ Yet the signing of the agreement was the cause of many disputes between the US and some of its major allies. France, along with Israel sharply criticized the diplomatic rapprochement with Tehran. Israel and the Arab States see the fact that the West openly acknowledged Iran's right to enrich uranium on its territory and the use of nuclear power for civilian purposes as a threat. Israel's response to the agreement (to whose negotiation they were not present) was negative; in the words of Prime Minister Netanyahu "*What was achieved last night in Geneva is not a historic agreement, but a historic mistake.*"⁹⁶ Of course the Israeli stance is based on the postulate, that Israel will not allow Iran to develop any military nuclear capability, and provides zero alternative.

As indicated above, Iran was previously repeatedly urged by the United States and the UN Security Council to halt all uranium enrichment. The participants went back to their homes, thinking that after a decade they finally came to an agreement, but already at the moment of concluding this agreement they all understood it differently. According to US Secretary of State Kerry the agreement does not include the recognition of Iran's right to enrich uranium,⁹⁷ while Iran's chief negotiator sees the agreement as a recognition of Iran's nuclear program.⁹⁸ This perception resonates in the opinion of the Hezbollah ("great victory of Iran and all nations in the region"⁹⁹). In my opinion it is Israel who is right; the agreement with Tehran is unreasonable, because Iran's nuclear program was not terminated, the commitment was simply to stop - while sanctions were lifted. The agreement does not give any guarantees that Iran will not continue its nuclear program in the future.

With the signing of the Geneva Agreement the question of what happens if after 6 months a final agreement is not reached quickly arose. During 2014 it became clear that this question is pertinent as the next rounds of negotiations yielded no result. In July 2014 at which point the six-month deadline set by the Geneva agreement expired, and after more

⁹⁴ *Accord Reached With Iran to Halt Nuclear Program.* The New York Times, Nov 23, 2013.

⁹⁵ "*If this Congress sends me a new sanctions bill now that threatens to derail these talks, I will veto it.*"The White House. *President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address.* January 28, 2014.

⁹⁶ *Israel's Netanyahu calls Iran deal 'historic mistake.'* The Washington Post, Nov 204, 2013.

⁹⁷ „*the deal does not include any recognition of an Iranian "right" to enrich uranium.*“ Cit. podleIran and world powers reach interim deal on nuclear program. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

⁹⁸ „*the deal had recognized Iran's nuclear program.*“ Cit. podleIran and world powers reach interim deal on nuclear program. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

⁹⁹ حزب الله: اتفاق ايران النووي، انتصار نموذجي وإنجاز عالمي نوعي *Hezbollah: Iran's nuclear treaty, a typical triumph of global and qualitative success.*

Al Alam International News Channel. 25 Nov 2013.

futile talks the deadline was postponed to November 2014 (with the same result), another term was then planned for July 2015.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA, signed in July 14, 2015, includes the easing of sanctions under specified conditions. JCPOA is a political agreement, which is based consistently on the strict, verifiable and time-bound fulfillment of commitments relating solely to the Iranian nuclear program. The rigorous monitoring and inspection towards the Iranian nuclear facilities will remain in effect even after the fulfilling of the agreed obligations arising from the JCPOA which are a fundamental condition for lifting the sanctions. The sanctions by the United States, the United Nations and multilateral sanctions concerning Iran's energy, finance, shipping, automotive and other industries, will be suspended or canceled if Iran does comply with the key commitments regarding its nuclear program, set out in the JCPOA. The plan enables Iran to freely export oil and Iran will regain access to its frozen foreign currency reserves of nearly \$60 billion, which are being managed by various foreign banks.¹⁰⁰

The Iranian obligations arising from JCPOA are primarily aimed at limiting the possibility of production of the two major components of nuclear weapons. Highly enriched uranium, ie. Uranium enriched to 90% (Highly Enriched Uranium - HEU) and plutonium, which is extracted by re-processing irradiated nuclear reactor fuel. Iran's commitments should extend the time the country needs to obtain sufficient quantities of nuclear fuel for one nuclear weapon, the so-called breakout time, from the current two to three months to at least one year. This should be enough time to take appropriate countermeasures. A breach in Iran's obligations would be followed by an immediate renewal of sanctions on the regime, and in extreme cases, even the possibility of implementing the use of military solutions.

In accordance with the contractual agreement JCPOA, in July 20, 2015 the UN Security Council discussed an unanimously adopted Resolution no. 2231.¹⁰¹ In it, among other things, the document welcomes and requests UN Member States and regional and international organizations to support its execution. It calls on Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA as well as provides an outline for the procedural implementation of UN sanctions. According to the text of the resolution its provisions should expire ten years after its adoption on the basis of a letter of discharge.

¹⁰⁰ Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. US Department of State; UN, Security Council, Adopting Resolution 2231 (2015), Endorses Joint Comprehensive Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Programme. 20 July 2015.

¹⁰¹ UN Security Council, Resolution 2231 (2015), 20 July 2015, S/RES/2231 (2015)

The final day was July 14, 2015, the ninetieth day after the approval of the UN Security Council a so-called „adoption day“ occurred when the parties began the fulfillment of the agreed upon conditions. Establishing the exact date of implementation, ie. the initiation of the fulfillment of the agreement is not yet possible - it depends mainly on the speed of the implementation of commitments by Iran. These include reducing the amount of stored low-enriched uranium by 98% (presumably, it will be moved to the Russian Federation), reducing the number of centrifuges and converting underground enrichment facilities into research and development centers. Simultaneously with solving these tasks, Iran will also have to allow IAEA inspectors thorough inspection of all these activities, which can take up to 6-9 months.

JCPOA can be classified as a diplomatic achievement and a demonstration of political will and mutual willingness to resolve issues. However, it should closely monitor compliance with the commitments, which is a long-term activity. It is clear that simultaneously with the reached agreement there is an increase in the importance of Iran's role in solving critical problems of the MENA region, especially Syria. This was reflected in the speech of President Obama on September 28, 2015 at the 70th UN General Assembly in New York 102 and was mentioned, during the US-Russian talks on at the presidential level the next day.¹⁰³

From the outlined course of the negotiations over Iran's nuclear program it is clear that the approach of President Bush and the Obama Administration is fundamentally different. Republican Bush exercised an uncompromising stance and advocated, that the relationship of America towards Iran could only radically change (for the better) after Iran completely changed their behavior both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, especially regarding nuclear issues. Bush was not in favor of compromise and preferred simple short-term solutions, as demonstrated by a number of other MENA „adventures“, which the president undertook during his stay in the White House. Obama gave Iran a chance to improve mutual relations at the beginning of his tenure. *„Our goal has always been divesting a number of ways in which Iran could get a nuclear weapon, and we must be sure that sanctions will be released step by step, only if Iran will do what is expected of them.“*¹⁰⁴ The basis of this is the policy of give-get, in other words, America (resp. The world's democratic community, including the UN or EU) will respond to any Iranian compliant actions positively. Obama

¹⁰² The White House. *Remarks by President Obama to the United Nations General Assembly*, New York, Sept 28, 2015.

¹⁰³ The White House. *Remarks by President Obama at the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism*. New York, Sept 29, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Cit. podle U.S., *Iran may extend nuclear talks*. The Washington Times, Nov 23, 2014.

started up the complicated diplomatic play of concessions and small steps, which has triumphed so far concluding with the agreement in 2015.

3.3 Could Iran build a nuclear bomb if it chooses to?

If we were to ponder the question in the title, it is necessary to first clarify the reasons which lead today states to develop and possess nuclear weapons; it is important to understand these reasons for the further consideration of Iran's nuclear program. Of course there is the traditional assumption that states are trying to acquire or develop nuclear weapons primarily due to military and strategic reasons. Analysts (for example, Scott Sagan) however offer other alternative formulas (models) as the reasons for possessing (or not possessing) nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁵ The first, the security model, is based on the assumption that states are trying to develop and to possess nuclear weapons in order to strengthen their national security against foreign threats, especially nuclear threats. According to the domestic politics model, nuclear weapons are a way to promote the interests of various national groups, and the country arms itself with them without taking into account any (even non-existent) external security threats. The third model, the norms model is about symbolism, or intimidation; the state is building a nuclear arsenal to intimidate any potential enemies. If I relied on this theoretical framework, it would be possible to instantly find two reasons for the Iranian need for armament; however, I believe, that to intimidate the enemy and to protect oneself it would first be necessary to publicly admit that the state owns nuclear weapons at all, and to document this ownership. This has not happened in Iran - from Scott Sagan's theoretical framework, I gather that it does not yet have any nuclear weapons - and estimates as to when or how long it will take before Iran will have an operational nuclear weapon differ (with the assumption that its aim is the acquisition of one). Some sources even speak of an "Islamic" or "Shi'ia" bomb – „*Iran might seek to spread its capability to allies, perhaps viewing its technological achievement as an 'Islamic bomb' or possibly even a 'Shi'ia bomb'*“.¹⁰⁶

In 2007, the IAEA chief Baradei leaned towards the idea that Iran has no weapons.¹⁰⁷ In 2009, the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND), said that according to their information Iran might have a nuclear bomb in six months time. Apparently, German

¹⁰⁵ Compiled by SAGAN, S. D.: *Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapon*, pg. 54.

¹⁰⁶ HUNTLEY, Wade L. *Rebels without a cause*, pg. 732.

¹⁰⁷ „*But have we seen Iran having the nuclear material that can readily be used into a weapon? No. Have we seen an active weaponization program? No.*“ Cit. From *No Evidence Iran Building Nuclear Weapons* : Mohamed ElBaradei. The Associated Press, 28 Oct 2007.

companies were involved in the production of rocket carriers, according to the BND.¹⁰⁸ In August 2012 the IAEA stated that Iran has 90 kg of 20% enriched uranium, and that each month it produces an additional 15 kg (for one nuclear bomb you need around 25 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (90% enrichment), for the production of such amount you need about 125 kg of 20% enriched uranium).¹⁰⁹ According to the Director of National Intelligence James Clapper Iran in 2014 has all the necessary components for the assembly of a functional nuclear weapon.¹¹⁰ This report taken as factual mainly by the Israeli media; it is part of their long-term strategic campaign against Iran, but some US analysts suspect Clapper of lying.¹¹¹ Israel claims Iran already has a nuclear weapon and has tested them in its Parchin military complex.¹¹²

Media information about the existence or absence of an Iranian nuclear bomb can not be taken too seriously; they are always influenced by the sentiments of the author who prepared the text for publication. Therefore, it is necessary to consult the official reports of the IAEA, which have the appropriate credibility and build on the specific findings of agency inspectors.¹¹³ Even though „*the Agency remains concerned about the possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile,*“¹¹⁴ the IAEA inspectors have not found concrete evidence of weaponization. In a report this information was presented as this: „*the Agency is not in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.*“¹¹⁵

A nuclear Iran is certainly a security risk to US allies in MENA and it might threaten the stability of the whole region. On the other hand, it should be noted that due to the fact that

¹⁰⁸ *Der Albtraum der Welt*. Stern, Published 15. 7. 2009.

¹⁰⁹ JOHNSON, Alan. Bibi's Bomb: The Iranian Bomb Is No Joke. *World Affairs*. January/February 2013. Currently, Iran has five nuclear facilities - a light water reactor, Bushehr, Arak heavy-water reactor, uranium conversion facility at Isfahan, the uranium enrichment Qom and main uranium enrichment facility Natanz. It is possible and likely that more centrifuges can be positioned (out of range of satellite cameras) underground. see closer HENDEL, Yoaz. *Iran's Nukes and Israele's Dilema*. URL <<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/bibi%E2%80%99s-bomb-iranian-threat-no-joke>>

¹¹⁰ "Iran has the scientific, technical, and industrial capacity to eventually produce nuclear weapons." Cit from Clapper: *Iran Ready for Nuclear Breakout*. Commentary Magazine, Jan 29, 2014.

¹¹¹ For example. *Iran Has the Bomb*. American Thinker, Feb 20, 2014; *White House insists James Clapper will not lead NSA surveillance review*. The Guardian, Aug 13, 2013.

¹¹² *Israel says Iran tested nuclear weapons in military complex*. Reuters / Al Arabiya News, Sept 24, 2014.

¹¹³ IAEA. Board of Governors. *Implementation of the NPT Safeguards. Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran*.(GOV/2014/10) 20 February 2014.

¹¹⁴ The same, point 63, pg. 11.

¹¹⁵ The same, point 74, pg. 14.

there has not been any concrete evidence about the development of a nuclear weapon in Iran, it might just be that Obama's Iranian Agreement of 2015 is trying to further reassure the community that they will not get a nuclear weapon. Even in the absence of evidence of a nuclear threat, it is possible that the imposition of additional sanctions and the application of a harsh approach is rather a manifestation of a paranoid perception of MENA reality. However, this logically supports both Saudi Arabia and Israel, because the best solution for their interests in the region, is to push Iran against the wall and not allow them to develop their regional geopolitical ambitions. When viewed in perspective, it is crucial to ask whether such an approach is counterproductive in a full regional context and whether a greater polarization of an already polarized environment is advantageous for the United States. Even if it is in the interests of its allies.

4. U.S. Policy Approaches

As mentioned in previous chapters, after Obama took office he began to move foreign policy towards Iran in a friendlier direction. Obama's ascension to the position and prospects of the proclaimed changes initially manifested in an increase in debates on the new administrations expected policy towards Iran and the reboot of relations.¹¹⁶ This led to dozens of new or existing US think-tanks, academics and politicians being involved.¹¹⁷ On the one hand we had advocates of starting talks with Iran, on the other hand those who called for the introduction of all possible measures to halt Iran's nuclear program. The first group drew attention to an insulation failure and the little effectivity of the sanctions imposed on Iran.¹¹⁸ These measures have failed to change Iran's attitude, but contributed to a deterioration of the already damaged US-Iranian relations. Therefore, according to these analysts' feedback the cooperation between the United States and Iran is at risk, even though both states are in fact able to share the same interests. This policy of isolation and threats also strengthens the Iranian radicals and hinders the development of democracy. Iran is a very important player in the MENA and they have have similar interests as the United States, concerning Afghanistan, energy policy, the fight against terrorism, drugs and smuggling. Beginning formal negotiations and cultural dialogue between the two countries - according to proponents of this

¹¹⁶ „Chance for a new start.“ PARSI, Trita. *A Single Roll of the Dice*, pg. 10.

¹¹⁷ TIRMAN, John. *The Battle for Iran*. NIAC, National Iranian-American Council, NIAC Memo, 30 Nov 2008.

¹¹⁸ This assertion, however, is highly questionable; the particular effect the sanctions is very difficult to objectively evaluate their impact on Iran's economy could be considerable. see, e.g. *Iran ramps up food imports via Turkish banks*. Reuters, Mar 23, 2012; *Impact of Iran Sanctions Widens*. The New York Times, April 3, 2012.

soft policy – would remove the long term distrust and hostility between Iran and the United States.

The Hawks argued, that the attitude of the Iranian regime towards the United States, the West in general and Israel, leads to a significant threat to the security interests of all of these players if Iran succeeds in acquiring a nuclear weapon. A proposal to negotiate with Iran is nothing new, the Europeans have negotiated with Iran since 2003, and to practically no avail. The obstructive tactics of the Iranians were just a tool for saving time, during which Iran could successfully implement its uranium enrichment program. Obama thus has only two options; either allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons or he must take more effective action to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power.

Obama's member selection for the new government promised no radical changes to policy towards Iran. Hillary Clinton, Obama's first Secretary of State, and Robert Gates¹¹⁹ (a republican, whom Obama took over from the previous Bush government), as Defense Minister. He supported the major decisions of the Bush Administration and due to his proximity to Israel it was not obvious that he would be the part of the administration that will bring a pervasive change. According to Clinton, a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable, and in the event that Iran *'gets a nuclear weapons program, that will launch an arms race in the Middle East the likes of which we've never seen'*.¹²⁰ According to Clinton, the U.S. can only offer economic benefits to Iran if it ends its nuclear program, terminates its support for terrorist organizations, joins the MENA peace process and will assist with the stabilization of Iraq. In other words, there was no one in Obama's Cabinet who would admit the redefinition of relations between Iran and US if Iran does not change its basic principles.

Barack Obama entered the presidential office with the conviction that it is time to create a new era. His speech in Cairo in June 2009 clearly formulated his vision: *„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, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap,*

¹¹⁹ Gates was an opponent of the military attack on Iran. 'We have seen in Iraq, That once war is unleashed, it Becomes unpredictable.' He warned that the Iranians could due to the US military action to disrupt oil exports from the Persian Gulf, increase support for the Iraqi insurgency and accelerate the terrorist attacks around the world, it is extremely undesirable. according to HAGAN, Kenneth J.; BICKERTON, Ian J. *Unintended consequences*, s. 187; In response to the demands of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to the US military action against Iran, Gates said: *"I disagree that only a credible military threat can get Iran to take the actions that it needs to end its nuclear weapons program."*. cited by *Why give Iran a reason not to fear a military attack?* The Washington Post, Nov 18, 2010.

¹²⁰ CLINTON, Hillary. *Interview With Vladimir Pozner* of First Channel Television, March 19, 2010.

and share common principles – principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.”¹²¹ The speech signaled Iran's opportunity to return to the international community. The controversial results of the Iranian presidential elections, which took place June 12, 2009, were a major turning point in Obama's efforts to improve relations. Hundreds of thousands of Iranians took to the streets to protest against the results of these elections, which ensured Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a second term. The regime responded with violence and intimidation and attracted international outrage. Obama's friendliness encountered Iranian reality. It turned out that Iran's policy has two faces, one side represented by the accommodating and diplomatic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose representatives are open to negotiation, and on the other hand, conservatives being represented by the Revolutionary Guards, whose ideology is based on the premise that America is the greatest enemy.¹²²

The promised changes in foreign (and security) policies gradually began to manifest themselves. In September 17, 2009, President Obama announced that when it comes to missile defense, which is designed to address the threat of Iranian short- and medium-range missiles in Europe, the US will be switching to the strategy of "*Phased Adaptive Approach*".¹²³ This was a radical change from the concept of the previous Bush Administration. Bush's plans were based on the deployment of ground-based missile defense systems in Europe, like the systems deployed in California and Alaska. This would include bilateral agreements for a missile station in Poland and missile defense radar in the Czech Republic. Obama's defense system is flexible, initially using mobile radars and interceptors mounted on Aegis-equipped Ticonderoga class cruisers and Arleigh Burke Class Destroyers. According to the Obama administration, the new plan uses technology that is proven and cost-effective, and will be able to adapt as threats evolve.

The next step for the new president respectively the new Administration was drawing up a new National Security Strategy, which announced the end of the global war on terror.¹²⁴ Obama distanced himself from the Bush strategy of preventive war and preemptive strikes and replaced it with "new partnership" multilateral diplomacy¹²⁵ and the promotion of

¹²¹ The White House. *Remarks By The President On A New Beginning*. Cairo University, Egypt. June 4, 2009.

¹²² CRIST, David. *The Twilight Wars*, pg. 541-543.

¹²³ The White House. *Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy A "Phased, Adaptive Approach" for Missile Defense in Europe*. Sept 17, 2009.

¹²⁴ *National Security Strategy 2010*, pg. 22; later for example The White House. *Remarks by the President at the National Defense University*, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., May 23, 2013.

¹²⁵ *National Security Strategy 2010*, pg. 22.

"going soft on Iran".¹²⁶ In September 27, 2013, during a visit by President Rouhani at the meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York, President Obama and Rouhani spoke by phone; it was the first personal contact at the presidential level since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. According to a spokesman of the White House they „expressed their mutual political will to rapidly solve the nuclear issue.“¹²⁷

Convergence between Obama and Rouhani was received negatively by Israel. We might recalled that relations between Obama and Netanyahu were far from optimal.¹²⁸ Israel's current leadership and their allies in the US Congress sought to block all efforts to make concessions towards Iran. These attitudes were the cause of a crisis of unprecedented proportions in American diplomacy, which has grown with the closure of the nuclear agreement with Iran. The negative reactions from Israel and the political fight on American soil about the future of the agreement caused a split between the US and Jewish state. What was also unusual was the "unification" of attitudes of a foreign country (ie., Israel) with the the legislative body (the Republican controlled Congress) against the president and a large part of the international community.¹²⁹

The essence of the Israeli rejection of the agreement lies in the alleged danger that Iran's agreement does not prohibit them from possessing a nuclear weapon. It often speaks of the fear of Iranian influence, which is likely due to the the lifting of sanctions and the release of a significant amount of funds. Even Netanyahu's speech at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly on October 1 2015 went in this direction. The Israeli official devoted approximately half of his speech to justifying his negative attitude towards the Iranian nuclear agreement.¹³⁰ Sufficient funds will mean a significant strengthening of Iranian activities directed against the Jewish state in the future. Netanyahu pointed to what Iran had done in the last six months since the signing of the agreement in Lausanne. They increased arms supplies to Syria, sent troops of Revolutionary Guards, and thousands of Afghan and Pakistani Shiites into Syria – and they fully support the Assad regime.¹³¹ The Iran supported Hezbollah organization smuggled military technology to shoot down Israeli aircrafts and to sink Israeli

¹²⁶ „Going soft on Iran.“ PARSI, Trita. *A Single Roll of the Dice*, pg. 11.

¹²⁷ „expressed their mutual political will to rapidly solve the nuclear issue.“ Cit. podle Obama, *Iran's Rouhani hold historic phone call*. Reuters, Sept 28, 2013; see also *The White House: President Obama Announces New Diplomatic Efforts with the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Sept 27, 2013); KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*. Congressional Research Service, October 1, 2014, pg. 3.

¹²⁸ ALLIN, Dana H., SĪMON, Steven, *Obama's Dilemma*, pg. 30.

¹²⁹ GIBSON, Bryan R. *The Long Road to Tehran*, pg. 2-5.

¹³⁰ UN. *Address by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly*. 1 October 2015.

¹³¹ It should just be recalled that Iran has long been ally Syria. see also El HUSSEINI, Rola, *Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal*, pg. 810.

ships into Lebanon. Hezbollah has also received attack drones from Iran, which can accurately hit any target in Israel..¹³²

According to Netanyahu's statement, Israel and other MENA countries consider Iran and the so called. Islamic State a common enemy and "*if they fight them, it should not be by strengthening one of them, but by weakening them both.*" The passage on the relations with the US labeled them as an "unshakable alliance" (*The Alliance Between Israel and the United States is unshakeable*), and praised Obama's willingness to support the country's security, to maintain Israel's military superiority and to simply help Israel. According to Netanyahu, the US-Israeli differences over Iran's nuclear agreement are just "family squabbles". Despite all his strong words it is clear that Netanyahu is aware that the agreement can in no way reversed. His openly negative attitude, found strong support within the American Jewish community and in the most influential American pro-Israel lobbying organization AIPAC.

Given that this is taken from a speech by Israel's most powerful leader it is necessary to take the information „with a grain of salt“. The problems that Netanyahu pointed out in his speech, are legitimate from the Israeli point of view, but a realistic overview of the current political situation in the MENA region tells us that we can not expect countries with the possibilities, power and status that Iran has, to not engage in regional conflict. Specifically when it comes to the conflict in Syria, which Netanyahu referred to, there are many interests that Iran has in common with the United States, and given the fact that Obama has never been a supporter of costly military interventions and wars, from the perspective of the United States they need to use players with similar interests to enforce them, while maintaining the smallest possible US engagement.

The November encounter between Obama and Netanyahu in Washington, indicated that relations between the US and Israel have calmed down. While Obama continues to regard the agreement as a success, which closes the path of acquiring nuclear weapons to Tehran, Netanyahu argues that the agreement is a historic mistake, yet they have both found some common ground. „*We have a common interest in preventing Iran violating the deal that was signed.*“¹³³ The perception of the agreement with Iran, is completely pragmatic on the American side as well. Obama and his Administration never expressed the expectation that Iran will instantly become an US ally, and will terminate all its subversive activities towards

¹³² The same.

¹³³ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. Press Briefing by Press Secretary Josh Earnest. November 09, 2015. URL<<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/09/press-briefing-press-secretary-josh-earnest-11915>>

US interests in the MENA region. The US administration is well aware of this threat and is ready to face it together with Israel, by providing Israel with all necessary assistance.

Regarding policy toward Saudi Arabia, despite political unrest and conflicts in the MENA region the Obama administration holds a standard course and views this country as an important regional partner, which is also confirmed by the systematic military assistance provided.¹³⁴ Alongside these close security ties the United States' concerns about human rights and religious freedom in the kingdom still remain. The issue is far more complicated, due to the fact that the Saudis categorically reject any foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country. The Saudi representation observes the certain cooling of relations with concern, this logically occurred after Bush jr. left the White House, as he was an uncritical supporter of the „desert state“. However as was already mentioned, Obama might be slightly more critical of the actions and policies of Saudi Arabia, but when it comes to mutual relations, he did not introduce any fundamental changes.

The signing of the nuclear agreement with Iran is supposed to be seen as a successful breakthrough after many years of a conserved problem, whose solution seemed nowhere in sight. Although the many fears of a unsuccessful implementation of the agreement are certainly justified, from the US perspective it is not possible to embark on a wave of harsh policies, that were led by G. W. Bush. Obama has been aware of this fact all thorough his presidency and due to the important role of Iran in the geopolitical realities of MENA he has decided to follow a more inclusive approach. At the same time due to the maintenance of strong ties with its allies there is no imminent threat to the security of Saudi Arabia or Israel caused by the nuclear deal with Iran.

¹³⁴ Since October 2010, the United States sold Saudi Arabia fighter planes, helicopters, missile defense systems, missiles, bombs, armored vehicles and other equipment worth more than 90 billion USD. see BLANCHARD, Christopher M. Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations. Congressional Research Service, September 8, 2015.

5. Possible Regional Implications

Before I begin to think about what possible implications Obama's international policy can have in the MENA region, I would like to emphasize several related circumstances. First we must establish that for centuries in the security complex of the Persian Gulf there have been two potential issues and mutual threats. The first line of conflict is religious and it happens between two branches of Islam – Sunni and Shiite;¹³⁵ the Sunni's were a majority ruling party in all the states in the Persian Gulf until the fall of Saddam's regime, apart from Iran, which was controlled by the Shiites. In the last ten years, the Shiite branch of Islam is experiencing a surge of power related not only to the fall of the Iraqi regime. But also the related process of the rise of power of the Shiites in Lebanon and the emancipation of Shiite communities in other MENA countries as a result of the Arab Spring. Despite the safety risks that this process brings to the interests of the United States and its key allies, it is important to realize that it is a largely natural process and it is irreversible. From the perspective of the United States, it is necessary to regulate it or to constructively participate in it, because the effort for a violent reversal is not realistic in the current context of US geopolitical possibilities.

The violent marginalization of the Shia community could in fact be counterproductive in the MENA context in the long term and could produce further religious-political radicalism that could potentially strengthen the already very strong anti-American sentiments in the region. Given that the United States does not currently have the financial capacity for effective military deterrence of all such threats, the effort for a certain emancipation of the Shiites in the pan-regional context is the logical procedure to reduce at least part of the radicalization threat.

The lines of conflict between the Shiites and Sunnis in the MENA region are a geopolitical reality and due to the strong polarization of the region and the turbulent changes

¹³⁵ The central point of schism between Sunnis and Shiites came after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century and involves discipleship and the related form of government. Sunnis generally prefer to be unfair government against anarchy. Shiites believe versus secular government in conjunction with the spiritual. One significant difference is the way of further development and application of law. Shiites have historically been in the Gulf region for centuries on the fringes of society. With the emergence of modern states in the 20th century, the situation has not changed significantly; Shiites were denied any political power and were often severely persecuted. The highest levels of discrimination took place in Iraq after the onset of Saddam Hussein to power. Shiites in the Gulf region but not a numerical minority, make up 70% of the residents of the area, but they are not evenly distributed, mostly concentrated in Iran, Iraq and Bahrain, where they constitute a majority of the population. In Iran, the Shiite branch of Islam reported nearly 90% of people in Iraq, it is 60-65% and in Bahrain almost 70%. Kuwait has about 30% Shia minority and the UAE 16%.

in the area, it can not be fundamentally manipulated. Instead it is necessary to stabilize the situation and counterbalance it with appropriate means. This conflict is also a bigger source of regional instability than a potential nuclear Iran. Likewise, the potential threat to Israel is based more on historical experience and general hatred of Israel by the MENA population. The root causes of the disputes are deeper and therefore the very question of the possession or non-possession of nuclear weapons will not resolve or remove them. In the context of a nuclear Iran it is a more recent concern that if Iran acquires a nuclear bomb, the other states in the region, it will follow. Thus leading to a nuclear arms race among the MENA countries. Given that nuclear weapons have existed for seventy years and we did not see any uncontrolled proliferation, such concerns have been and are unfounded. If Iran became the second MENA nuclear superpower since 1945, it is probable that not much would happen - Israel obtained a bomb sometime in the 60s,¹³⁶ when it was at war with many neighboring states and nuclear weapons were a much bigger threat to the Arab world than the Iranian weapon would be today.

Iran's regional rivals - especially Israel, as well as the Arab Gulf states - feel most threatened by any compromise that would allow Iran to continue uranium enrichment (and thereby maintain its potential to build a nuclear weapon). But they also fear that any sign of rapprochement between Washington and Tehran could lead to Iran's reintegration into the international community and could affect the power balance in the MENA region.¹³⁷

5.1 The U.S. strategic allies

In this part of the thesis I will focus on US relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia and on the potential consequences that the US rapprochement with Iran may have on these alliances. The interests of the United States in relation to these two allies have been unchanged for a long time, and their maintenance is built on several decades of intensive cooperation. Therefore any changes that may arise in these alliances in connection with the situation in the MENA region, should not significantly fracture the alliances that have been working for such a long time.

¹³⁶ The State of Israel has never officially commented on its possession of nuclear weapons and the nuclear disarmament agreement that it did not join. From the perspective of Western civilizations the possession of nuclear weapons by the state of Israel is in order (arguing with the an Israeli parliamentary democracy), from the perspective of Arab States, however, the same can not be said.

¹³⁷ *Iran nuclear talks: Now or never for a deal?* Al Jazeera, Nov 17, 2014.

Saudi Arabia

Political unrest and changes due to the Arab Spring pose a certain risk for the foreign and domestic policy of the authoritarian Saudi Arabian monarchy. Especially in relation to years of the American dilemma of on the one hand, trying to maintain friendly ties with the Saudis and on the other hand supporting the democratic processes within the Arab Spring. The Saudi confrontation with the regime of Hafez al-Assad in Syria and its active role in Yemen's transition, might demonstrate an alliance with the US. Yet when it comes to some other regional issues, such as support for the monarchy in Bahrain, the stances of the United States and Saudi Arabia differ.

Disharmony could jeopardize the flow of Saudi energy resources into international markets and undermine the long-established security partnership between the Saudis and the USA. America must also deal with the dilemma of reconciling democratic principles and those of the Saudis government policy. This applies, to freedom of religion, freedom of assembly or freedom of speech and of course the human rights situation - as they are implemented in Saudi Arabia. Government reports commonly refer to restrictions relating to human rights and religious freedom in the kingdom.¹³⁸ The Obama Administration's approach toward Arab Spring revolutions did not contribute to the harmony of mutual relations. For example, the Saudis greatly resented the fact that during the Arab Spring the United States completely abandoned longtime ally, Egyptian President Mubarak, who was loyal to the US for thirty years.¹³⁹ Because an American deviate from the ‚friendly‘ authoritarian regimes, would logically also threaten the government of the Saudi royal family. Given the considerable importance of Saudi Arabia in the security vision of the MENA region in the eyes of the United States, it appeal that this development is rather unlikely. Especially with regard to the fact, that subsequent developments in Egypt lead to a very similar type of authoritarian regime, which the United States supported.

The primary task of the support of Saudi Arabia in the perimeter of American interests is to maintain energy security in which the Saudis play a crucial role. On the other hand, the weakening of very strong friendly relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia has

¹³⁸ See, eg. A regular annual report of the Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Affairs (2013): „The most important human rights problems reported included citizens' lack of the right and legal means to change their government; pervasive restrictions on universal rights such as freedom of expression, including on the internet, and freedom of assembly, association, movement, and religion; and a lack of equal rights for women, children, and noncitizen workers.“ *Saudi Arabia. Human rights report*, pg. 1

¹³⁹ SPYER, Jonathan. *Confidence Game: Losing American Support, the Gulf States Scramble*; DOBBINS, James et al. *Coping with a nuclearising Iran*, pg. 62.

less to do with convergence with Iran, as with many other factors. Among other things, the louder and louder criticism of the alliance to Saudi Arabia, which resonates from the American public, from Congress and other institutions. Arguments against a strong connection with the Saudis range from an unclear attitude of Saudi Arabia towards international terrorism, criticism of the tragic human rights situation to the fact that the uncritical promotion of Saudi Arabia's interests contradicts with American interests in many issues.

As we can see from the information mentioned, a certain loosening of the US-Saudi alliance during Obama's Presidency actually occurred. It would nevertheless be an unacceptable simplification to say that it was only because of Obama's friendly policy toward Iran. The complexity of the relationships is based on a wide range of other issues, that are either not related to the Iranian issue at all, or only very marginally. Moreover, seeing how crucial of an ally the United States is for Saudi Arabia, it is unlikely that rapprochement with Iran could in any way threaten energy security, which is crucial for the United States relations to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Arabian regime is totally dependent on the support of the US and it is in its own interest that the alliance be kept in good condition. Therefore we can expect that even though American rapprochement with Iran is definitely not to the Saudis liking, the Saudi Arabian government representatives will continue to strive for the best possible relations with its North American ally.

Israel

Israel has been a crucial US ally since the 70s. The United States has repeatedly stated that for them Israel's security is one of the determinants of policy in the MENA region. During Obama Presidency of course there has been a minor cooling of relations (although only on the outside, Israel is still by far the largest recipient of US economic aid). Mainly due to the unwillingness of the Israeli Government to try and restart the MENA peace process as well as active attempts to sabotage the US agreement on Iran nuclear program.

For several years now, Israeli political leaders have been pointing out that the greatest immediate threat to Israel's security is Iran and its nuclear program.¹⁴⁰ Israeli officials strive for Iran to officially declare that its nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes. In this context, Israeli officials publicly suggested that the absence of such a declaration can lead

¹⁴⁰ Cit in the words of Israeli Ambassador to the US Michael Arena, '*Obama is a true friend, Israelis misunderstood his outreach to Arab world*', denik Ha'aretz, July 11, 2013.

to an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities by Israeli military forces.¹⁴¹ „*There is every reason to worry that, in the coming years or months, a fearful Israel will conclude that it is cornered, with no choice but to launch a preventive war aimed at crippling Tehran's nuclear infrastructure and thereby removing - or at least forestalling - what Israelis consider a threat to the Jewish state's very existence.*“¹⁴² The cooling of Israeli-US relations was also caused by the American notion that to solve the Iranian nuclear issue, Israel must make concessions towards Palestine.¹⁴³ Israel insists that Iran poses an existential threat to its security, and uses its strong lobbying efforts in Congress to thwart a nuclear compromise.¹⁴⁴ The Obama Administration stopped Congress from adopting new sanctions towards Iran with a warning that blocking efforts to reach a diplomatic solution would pave the way to war. Relations between the White House and Israel are increasingly strained; Israel, for example, perceived very negatively, that its representatives were not invited to the next round of negotiations under the Joint Plan of Action in Vienna in autumn 2014.¹⁴⁵

In March 2015, Netanyahu spoke to the US Congress, which once again demonstrated the attitude of the state of Israel towards the Iranian nuclear program. The Israeli official position was that the Iranian nuclear threat must be removed and the Iranian nuclear program should be stopped and removed altogether.¹⁴⁶ This speech has deepened divisions between the United States and Israel. The Obama administration is working with the requirements from the forthcoming treaty in which Iran pledged that for the next ten years it will consent to inspection¹⁴⁷ and other measures (enriching uranium only at Natanz, to limit the degree of enrichment to 3.5 percent which is sufficient for energy, to limit the number of nuclear centrifuges to five thousand and to significantly reduce their stocks of low-enriched uranium, essentially freezing its nuclear program). According to Obama, it is likely that after these treaty ends there will be a new regime in Iran, the Supreme Leader might also change (the current Ayatollah is 75 years old) and the situation will be different. Israel sees a problem in the fact, that if Iran does not shut down thousands of its active centrifuges, there will always

¹⁴¹ ZANOTTI, Jim. *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, pg. 12

¹⁴² ALLIN, Dana; SIMON, Steven. *The sixth crisis*, pg. 4.

¹⁴³ *Why does President Obama treat his friends as enemies, and his enemies as friends?* The Jerusalem Post, Dec 11, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ *Netanyahu rooting for Republicans in U.S. midterm elections*. Haaretz, 3 Nov 2014.

¹⁴⁵ See for example: *Iran Nuclear Pact Faces an Array of Opposing Forces*. The New York Times, Nov 16, 2014; *Iran nuclear talks: Now or never for a deal?* Al Jazeera, Nov 17, 2014.

¹⁴⁶ *Netanyahu's speech to Congress on Iran*. March 3, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ US originally demanded that the controls can be performed anywhere, anytime, finally subsided and checks must be notified three weeks in advance and can only be in civilian facilities rather than military.

be a danger of weaponization. Therefore, the agreement is unacceptable for Israel.¹⁴⁸ The Congressmen took this Israeli stance with mixed feelings and it did not affect the final wording of the agreement.

Although the Israeli concerns for their own safety have legitimate historical roots and due to the strong anti-Israel sentiment across the Middle East can be described as partially justified. It is important to realize that Israel has unprecedented military and economic power, that is absolutely incomparable with the capabilities of its neighboring countries. Long-standing US support allowed Israel to build a strong security apparatus. And because of the influence of pro-Israel lobbying organizations in the US Congress, the interests of Israel are almost always in first place. It is clear that the claim, that in the event that Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, it will threaten the very existence of Israel is greatly exaggerated. The fact is, that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, it does not mean it will have technology that would manage to even threaten the sophisticated Israeli weapons systems. Especially, since Israel (though it would never officially admit it) has a much larger nuclear arsenal. Thus perceiving Obama's rapprochement with Iran as a diversion from traditional allies would be very simplistic and inaccurate. Iran as a security threat is hardly likely to actually endanger Israel's security. Especially because Israel will receive several billion dollars of economic aid annually, much of which will be invested in its security forces.

As is the case with Saudi Arabia, the alliance with Israel is also under fire from some internal criticism. References are made towards the pro-Israel lobby and in particular its adverse impact on the legislative process and political representation in the United States. Authors Marshaimer and Walt in their book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* even claim, that the representation of the interests of Israeli foreign policy in the MENA has come so far, that in many situations this policy is beneficial only to Israel and not for the United States.¹⁴⁹ Unlike the alliance to Saudi Arabia, the relations between the US and Israel do not seem to be overly complicated. In the context of small rapprochement with Iran we can not speak about any loosening of the US-Israeli alliance. As stated earlier in the thesis, even Netanyahu himself called these contradictions only a *disagreement within the family*, suggesting that even the radically right-wing government of Prime Minister Netanyahu does not experience a major disruption in relations with the US.

¹⁴⁸ US Department of State. *Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program*. April 2, 2015. See also: *The Iran Nuclear Negotiations Israel and the U.S. Congress*, pg. 68-92.

¹⁴⁹ MEARSHEIMER, John J., WALT, Stephen. *Israeli Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Public Lecture available at URL <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzXS3tmZrcU>>

5.2 The threats facing the United States

The main security risks to US interests in the MENA region is mainly great instability caused by a conflicting environment and the related fast paced rise of international terrorism built on religious-fundamentalist foundations. A serious security risk for the future development of the MENA region is the existence of the so called Islamic State (ISIL). „*Now, ISIL poses an immediate threat to the people of Iraq and the people throughout the region. And that's why our military action in Iraq has to be part of a broader, comprehensive strategy to protect our people and to support our partners who are taking the fight to ISIL. (...) And that starts with Iraq's leaders building on the progress that they have made so far and forming an inclusive government that will unite their country and strengthen their security forces to confront ISIL. (...) Any successful strategy, though, also needs strong regional partners. I'm encouraged so far that countries in the region, countries that don't always agree on many things, increasingly recognize the primacy of the threat that ISIL poses to all of them.*“¹⁵⁰

Washington sent military advisors to Iraq in the spring of 2014¹⁵¹ and in the summer they ordered airstrikes to protect US diplomats, civilians and soldiers in northern Iraq. A great allied coalition was created,¹⁵² which also began arming the Kurds.¹⁵³ Military action against ISIL has been exclusively airborne; the Obama administration does not (yet) plan the deployment of US troops for ground military action. Any ground military action against ISIL would have to be done in Syria or Iraq; both countries would thus become a battleground. The situation in Iraq is complicated further by internal feuds¹⁵⁴ between ex-premier Maliki and supporters of the newly-designated (August 2014) Prime Minister Abad, who was appointed into his function by the Shiite coalition in the Iraqi parliament.

¹⁵⁰ *President Obama Speaks to Press.* CNN, August 28, 2014.

¹⁵¹ *Iraq asks US for air strikes on ISIL rebels.* Al Jazeera, Jun 19, 2014. It offers the involuntary comparison with Vietnam, where military conflict also began with the sending advisors.

¹⁵² Besides NATO allies and others to regional allies Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Jordan. In the list of allies against the Islamists it ranks over 60 countries and international organizations. Most other countries have so far participated only in the supply of ammunition and clothing to the Iraqi and Kurdish troops or humanitarian aid.

¹⁵³ *Kerry wants flexible military commitment against ISIL.* USA Today, Dec 9, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ *Iraq crisis exclusive: US rules out military action until Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki stands down.* The Independent, Jun 19, 2014.

The emergence of the coalition was understandably not received well by the Iranian side. According to the Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Majlis (parliament) the "*so-called coalition of world peace, against terrorism, is only a political show by the US and its regional allies*" and its main objective is "*to destroy the infrastructure of Syria.*"¹⁵⁵

According to the US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel the so called Islamic State is not a bunch of rogues, but a "*well-funded and sophisticated organization of former military officers who have the helicopters, artillery, and can lead strategic battle.*"¹⁵⁶ ISIL is a hybrid group that partially replicates the Hezbollah and partially a guerrilla army. Meanwhile, I would dispute, that the so called Islamic State is a long term threat. History teaches us, that with similar groupings the spillover of troops from one area to another usually leads to rapid loss of power over the previously conquered area. ISIL might be faced with a big problem in maintaining control over the newly occupied territories, let alone building an effective infrastructure.

The fight against the so called Islamic State was one of the platforms, on which the convergence of interests between the United States and Iran was built. Obama considers Iran to be a natural deterrent of radical Sunni Islamism, which is currently the most immediate security risk in the MENA. Iran is a natural ally in this fight, and given the limited American capabilities and operability in the region. Efforts to involve other powers in this common interest is relatively logical, even though Iran is generally hostile towards the US.

Criticism of the Obama steps are mainly focused around the fact that, unlike ISIL Iran is a complex and long-term threat which seeks hegemony in the region. Thus the alliance with it because of the strong, but apparently short-term, threat of the so called Islamic State is shortsighted. Some critics of rapprochement with Iran argue that the potential construction of nuclear weapons will greatly threaten the safety of both major US allies, namely Israel and Saudi Arabia. They also argue, that we must not forget, that Iran's leaders are guided by extreme political views and might behave irrationally and commit extreme nuclear provocations.

Allied ties are certainly important for the United States and to promote their interests in the MENA region they are crucial to some extent. However as was shown already in the thesis, in the case of Saudi Arabia and in the case of Israel there are no major changes in the

¹⁵⁵ „Such an alliance is merely aimed at destroying Syria’s infrastructure.“ Cit by: *US-led coalition against ISIL, political stunt: Iran MP*. Press TV, Tehran, Iran, Oct 7, 2014.

¹⁵⁶ *U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel speaks during a press briefing at the Pentagon: Islamic State threat 'beyond anything we've seen'*. Reuters, Aug 21, 2014

dynamics of the alliance, as important pillars of the bilateral relations remain unchanged, or even strengthen. The small rapprochement with Iran, which Obama carried out during his Presidency is in the short term interests of the US and is undoubtedly beneficial in the long run. There is currently no reason for fundamental concerns about the safety of US allies. It would take several decades before Iran would be able to get into a position where it could realistically compete with Israel's military. A greater security concern is Iran's ability to effectively promote armed anti-Israeli groups, but judging by the last ten years these actions are not significantly limited by economic sanctions. In relation to Saudi Arabia there is a whole series of conflicting topics that are a greater threat to mutual relations than the rapprochement with Iran. The Saudi dependence on the United States combined with the current low oil prices means that Saudi Arabia does not have too many options as it seeks American support.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the new approach of the US administration towards Iran is also a major commitment for the United States. They have to be able to carry out adequate supervision over the compliance with the agreement, and they have to be able to react quickly and effectively in case that the American „friendliness“ is being taken advantage of. The alliance with Israel and Saudi Arabia is undoubtedly an important asset for American foreign policy and needs to be maintained in the best condition. It is essential that the United States approach the newly formed political line with regard to the fact that in certain circumstances it might have negative consequences on US allies.

Through the optics of standard realist foreign policy, it is necessary that the United States act rationally in pursuit of their goals. In the MENA context the fight against Islamic fundamentalism, is one of the most important interests which define American foreign policy in the region. Iran can, on the one hand to promote controversial anti-Israel groups, on the other hand, it also has an interest in defeating the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and other Sunni terrorist groups. Conversely, for example, Saudi Arabia is potentially very close to some of these groups, regardless of its alliance with the US. If the Obama administration wanted to pursue realistic foreign policy it could not simply keep taking care only of the alliances that has been in place for decades. While interests of important allies are important, the United States cannot put interests of its allies in front of the interests of its own. Realistic foreign policy should be based on rational alliances but it cannot ignore certain regional and geopolitical dynamics that may have deep influence on shaping foreign policy in unstable regions like the MENA region.

In conclusion, we can summarize the following. Strong allied ties with Israel and Saudi Arabia, are key for the United States in the pursuit of its interests in the MENA region. On the other hand, these alliances do not represent the only US interests in the region. As such, it is necessary that the United States are able to ensure the security of its allies, which it has been doing for a long time, and at the same time lead such a policy, which will contribute to the fulfillment of their other interests and stability in the region.

Conclusion

In the proposed thesis, I set the objective of answering the question of: *Can the loosening of the strong bonds between the United States and its key allies in the MENA region, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel, limit the ability of the United States' to enforce their interests in MENA, and could this situation possibly lead to larger geopolitical changes in the region?*

To be able to correctly answer the question, I analyzed selected official documents from the US government, as well Iranian state documents and other official sources. Besides these sources, I also used the information provided by credible internet portals (American newspapers: The New York Times, USA Today, The Independent, The Washington Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, British newspapers: The Guardian, The Telegraph, the Israeli dailies Haaretz and The Jerusalem Post, as well as Iranian and Arab sources: the newspaper Kayhan, Islamic Republic of Iran's Presidency website, Press TV, Tehran and website agency IRNA, the Islamic Republic News Agency and Al Jazeera)

In my thesis I first described the current political situation in the Middle East. In the next chapter, I dealt in detail with the development of the negotiations concerning Iran's nuclear program. As the threat of the weaponization of Iran's nuclear industry, is considerable according to the American Administration and the American Administration has been trying to stifle it for more than ten years. During this time, they exhausted a long series of ways of doing that, without any of them yielding the desired results. With Obama came the era of openness, negotiation and use of soft power. Obama revisited the policy of appeasement, which led to the historic agreement on Iran's nuclear program in mid-2015.

In the next two chapters I dealt with the other sources of the perilous security situation in the MENA region, especially the prolonged conflict between the Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam and the related rise of Shiites in recent years. In these chapters I also outlined the evolution of Obama's policy towards Iran in the context of the allied relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia, and then I analyzed possible impacts and consequences that rapprochement with Iran and concessions on its nuclear program may have on this alliance. In the passage devoted to current threats to America and its allies, I also dealt with the so called Islamic State and its role in the US-Iranian rapprochement.

Based on my analysis, I expressed the opinion that although at first glance there is a loosening of US MENA alliances, the reality is far less dramatic. Due to the fact the alliances with Saudi Arabia is built on a different foundation, than the deterrence of Iran, though they

also suffer from other problematic issues. Saudi Arabia is additionally currently heavily dependent on the United States, and therefore has an interest in keeping the relations at the highest level. Even if some of the steps that the Obama Administration has taken may not be entirely to their liking. The alliance with Israel stands on a long-term strong cooperation. The United States contributions to the security of the Jewish state are large and not just in the form of financial aid. Mild rapprochement with Iran, does not currently significantly endanger Israel's security. It does not change the need for great care on the part of the United States in the implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program from 2015, and the need for appropriate reactions to a failure to comply.

So to answer the research question, it must be said that strong allied ties with Israel and Saudi Arabia, are key for the United States in asserting their interests in the MENA region. On the other hand, these alliances do not represent the only US interests in the region. As such, it is necessary that the United States are able to ensure the security of its allies, which it has been doing for a long time and at the same time lead such a policy, which will contribute to the fulfillment of their other interests and stability in the region. Regarding the major geopolitical changes in the MENA region, these have been happening for a variety of reasons other than the US rapprochement with Iran. The rise of the Shia branch of Islam is a largely irreversible process and it is necessary to work constructively with it rather than to fight against it at any cost. In other words we can say that due to the long-term nature of US MENA alliances a significant disruption could pose a major risk to American interests in the region, but currently such disruptions have not occurred. It must also be noted that each alliance is undergoing a period of greater and lesser approach from the two partners. Particularly in the case of Saudi Arabia, but given that there is no violation of the fundamental pillars of the alliances, we can not talk about a significant disruption of these alliances.

Just as it would be inappropriate to underestimate the danger posed by the Iranian nuclear program to the security situation in MENA, it is also inappropriate to overestimate and demonize it at all costs. A collaborating superpower like Iran can have many positive impacts on regional stability. The United States can return to a harsh policy of sanctions at any time, but due to the fact that this policy has not worked very well and given the current chaotic security situation in MENA; we should not condemn the actions taken by the Obama Administration, especially in the current situation, where the threat to their allies is minimal.

Relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel are a very important aspect of American foreign policy in MENA. But due to the strong domestic criticism of both of these alliances, the future there will probably be a need for both alliances to be redefined. For them to better

serve the rapidly evolving interests USA in the MENA region. The alliance with Israel has been built on ensuring the security of the Jewish state, but given that Israel is now very well prepared for security risks this agenda is now somewhat irrelevant. Israel now has military and security on a similar (or higher) level than the surrounding countries. Saudi Arabia is going through a significant crisis and can not afford to significantly deviate from the alliance with the United States.

If the Americans want to lead an effective policy in the MENA region, it is necessary for them to properly respond to developments in the region and to act realistically and pragmatically, not based on ideological formulas that divide the region into enemy and ally. This is not to say that the United States should deviate from its allies and divert to other states, but rather that in the future it may be beneficial to form alliances more based on their own interests than the interests of their allies, especially when those interests are not identical.

Summary

This thesis main concern is to explain and analyze foreign policy of American President Barack Obama regarding Iran and its nuclear program in the context of security studies theory of realism. The theoretical framework used in the thesis allows the author to analyze thoroughly the discussed problems and is included in chapter one of the thesis. The thesis analyzes Obama's foreign policy also in the broader context of the MENA region especially in relation to American closest allies in the region, namely Saudi Arabia and Israel. The thesis describes the development of the relations between Iran and the United States since Obama came into office as well as the relations between the United States and its allies.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter puts up the theoretical framework that is later used to analyze current state of relations between the most important geopolitical players. The second chapter describes current development in order to put the U.S. – Iran relations into broader context of the region. It is concerned mainly with objectives and interests of the United States and Iran as well as current situation in the MENA region regarding the ongoing civil unrests, conflicts and waves of instability. The third chapter describes in detail the context of Iran nuclear program its development in recent years and most importantly the nuclear deal that was struck in the middle of the year 2015. Chapter four analyzes U.S. policy approaches in the discussed time period in the context of its important alliances and also in the context of the recent development in the region. The last chapter thoroughly examines how significant were the geopolitical changes and changes in relations between the United States and Iran and also how much influence did these changes have regarding the alliances with Saudi Arabia and Israel. The thesis concludes that despite warming relations between the United States and Iran, the alliances between the United States and Saudi Arabia and Israel respectively are deeply rooted in U.S. foreign policy paradigm and are not going to be negatively affected as to create the change of alliances.

References

a) Primary sources

AHMADINEJAD, Mahmood. *Address to the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*. New York, September 17, 2005.

URL <<http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/60/statements/iran050917eng.pdf>>

Congress of the United States. *Letter drafted by Representatives Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Ill.) and Mike Pence (R-Ind.)* URL <http://www.politico.com/static/PPM116_jackson.html>

EIA, US Energy Information Administration. *Annual Energy Outlook 2012* (DOE/EIA-0383 (2012). 240

URL <[http://www.eia.gov/forecasts/aeo/pdf/0383\(2012\).pdf](http://www.eia.gov/forecasts/aeo/pdf/0383(2012).pdf)>

IAEA. Board of Governors. *Implementation of the NPT Safeguards. Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran.* (GOV/2014/10) 20 February 2014.

URL <<http://d35brb9zkkbdsc.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/iaea-iranreport-02202014.pdf>>

IAEA. Communication dated 12 September 2005 from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency. INFCIRC/657. *Iranian Nuclear Policy & Activities Complementary Information To the Report of The Director General* (GOV/2005/67) 15 Sept 2005.

URL <<http://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2005/infcirc657.pdf>>

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. US Department of State.

URL <<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/>>

Joint Plan of Action. Geneva, 24 November 2013.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.co.il/st/inter/Hheb/images/geneva.pdf>>

Netanyahu's speech to Congress on Iran. March 3, 2015.

URL <<http://www.jns.org/jns-blog/2015/3/3/full-transcript-netanyahus-speech-to-congress-on-iran>>

OBAMA, Barack. *Remarks by the President on the Middle East and North Africa*. May 19, 2011.

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa%20>>

OBAMA, Barack. *We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL*. 10 Sept. 2014.

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-we-will-degrade-and-ultimately-destroy-isil>>

Saudi Arabia. Human rights report. 2013. US Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013. 47 s.

URL <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220586.pdf>>

The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran.

URL <<http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution.php>>

The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, Washington, D.C., September 13, 1993.

URL

<<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20principles.aspx>>

The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*, Washington, D.C., September 28, 1995.

URL <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/the%20israeli-palestinian%20interim%20agreement.aspx>>

The White House. *Fact Sheet on U.S. Missile Defense Policy A "Phased, Adaptive Approach" for Missile Defense in Europe*. Sept 17, 2009.

URL <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/FACT-SHEET-US-Missile-Defense-Policy-A-Phased-Adaptive-Approach-for-Missile-Defense-in-Europe/>

The White House: *First Step Understandings Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program*.(Nov 23, 2013)

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/23/fact-sheet-first-step-understandings-regarding-islamic-republic-iran-s-n>>

The White House. *Joint Statement on the Meeting between President Barack Obama and King Salman bin Abd alAziz Al Saud*.September 04, 2015

URL <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/04/joint-statement-meeting-between-president-barack-obama-and-king-salman>>

The White House. *National Security Strategy 2010*.

URL <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf>

The White House. *President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address*. January 28, 2014

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>>

The White House: *President Obama Announces New Diplomatic Efforts with the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Sept 27, 2013)

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/09/27/president-obama-announces-new-diplomatic-efforts-iran>>

The White House. *Remarks by President Obama and Prime minister Netanyahu of Israel in press availability*. May 18, 2009.

URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-israeli-prime-minister-netanyahu-press-availability>>

The White House. *Remarks by the President at the National Defense University*, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C., May 23, 2013.
URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>>

The White House. *Remarks By The President On A New Beginning*. Cairo University, Egypt. June 4, 2009.
URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>>

The White House. *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address*, Jan 24, 2012.
URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>>

The White House. *Remarks by President Obama to the United Nations General Assembly*, New York, Sept 28, 2015.
URL <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/28/remarks-president-obama-united-nations-general-assembly>>

The White House. *Remarks by President Obama at the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism*. New York, Sept 29, 2015.
URL <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/remarks-president-obama-leaders-summit-countering-isil-and-violent>>

The White House. *Statement by the President on Iran*. July 14, 2015
URL <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/14/statement-president-iran>>

The White House. *U.S.- Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement*. May 14, 2015
URL <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/14/us-gulf-cooperation-council-camp-david-joint-statement>>

The White House. *We Will Degrade and Ultimately Destroy ISIL*. Washington, Sept 10, 2014.
URL <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-we-will-degrade-and-ultimately-destroy-isil>>

UN. *Address by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the UN General Assembly*. 1 October 2015.
URL <http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/70/IL_EN.pdf>

UN. 70th. session. General Debate: 28 September - 3 October 2015.
URL <<http://gadebate.un.org/>>

UN. Security Council, Adopting Resolution 2231 (2015), Endorses Joint Comprehensive Agreement on Iran's Nuclear Programme. 20 July 2015.
URL <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc11974.doc.htm>>

UN Security Council, *Resolution 1696 (2006) Non-proliferation*, 31 July 2006, S/RES/1696 (2006)
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/453786b00.html>>

UN Security Council, *Resolution 1737 (2006) Non-proliferation*, 27 December 2006, S/RES/1737
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/telex/vtx/rwmain?docid=45c30c6f0>>

UN Security Council, *Resolution 1747 (2007) Non-proliferation*, 24 March 2007, S/RES/1747
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/460b8b7e2.html>>

UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1803 (2008)* [on further measures against Iran in connection with its development of sensitive technologies in support of its nuclear and missile programmes], 3 March 2008, S/RES/1803
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/48118b9e2.html>>

UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1835 (2008)* [on Iran's obligations to comply with Security Council's resolutions and meeting the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors], 27 September 2008, S/RES/1835 (2008)
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/48e47a442.html>>

UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 1929 (2010)* [on measures against Iran in connection with its enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development], 9 June 2010, S/RES/1929 (2010)
URL <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c1f2eb32.html>>

UN Security Council, *Resolution 2231 (2015)*, 20 July 2015, S/RES/2231 (2015)
URL <<http://www.un.org/en/sc/inc/pages/pdf/pow/RES2231E.pdf>>

United Nations / Treaties. *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT)*
URL <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>>

U.S. Department of State. *Iran Sanctions*.
URL <<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/index.htm>>

US Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*.
URL <<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224826.htm>>

US Department of State. *Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action Regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program*. April 2, 2015.
URL <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/04/240170.htm>>

c) Secondary sources

AIPAC. *Negotiations with Iran. Analysis: The Iran nuclear deal*. 20 s.
URL <<http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Comms/IranOnePagers.pdf>>

ALLIN, Dana; SIMON, Steven. Obama's Dilemma: Iran, Israel and the Rumours of War. *Survival*. 2010/2011, Vol. 52, No.6, s. 15-44.

ALLIN, Dana; SIMON, Steven. *The sixth crisis: Iran, Israel, America, and the rumors of war*. Oxford University Press, 2010. 192 s.

America, Israel, and the Middle East: Confronting the Challenges of Tomorrow. Washington DC (USA): The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008
URL <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=295>>

ARIEFF, Alexis, et al. *Change in the Middle East: Implications for US Policy*. Congressional Research Service, March 7, 2012.
URL <<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R42393.pdf>>

Arms Control Association. *History of Official Proposals on the Iranian Nuclear Issue*. January 2014.
URL <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Iran_Nuclear_Proposals>

BAHGAT, Gawdat. Nuclear Proliferation: The Islamic Republic of Iran. *Iranian Studies*, 2006, 39.3: 307-327. ISSN 1475-4819

BARŠA, Pavel a CÍSAŘ, Ondřej. *Anarchie a řád ve světové politice*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Portál, 2008. 559 s. ISBN 978-80-7367-094-8.

BARŠA, Pavel. Válka s Islámským státem. *A2larm*, online komentářový deník kulturního čtrnáctideníku A2. Zveřejněno 15. 11. 2014.
URL <<http://a2larm.cz/2014/11/valka-s-islamskym-statem/>>

BARZEGAR, Kayhan. Iran and the Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities. *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, volume XV, issue 1, Fall/Winter 2008, s. 87-99.
URL <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18724/iran_and_the_shiite_crescent.html>

BLANCHARD, Christopher M. *Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service, September 8, 2015.
URL <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>>

BRAND, Alexander. Beyond Obama – Change in the U.S. Foreign Policy and the Consequences for German-American Relation. *Crucial Problems of International Relations through the Eyes of Young Scholars*. Prague : University of Economics 2009, ISBN 978-80-245-1578-6.

British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy. June 2010. 29 s.

URL

<http://www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/globalbp_uk_english/reports_and_publications/statistical_energy_review_2008/STAGING/local_assets/2010_downloads/oil_section_2010.pdf>

BURKETT, Elinor. *Golda*. 1. vyd. Praha: Emet, 2011. 423 s. ISBN 978-80-254-6648-3.

BURR, William. A Brief History of U.S.-Iranian Nuclear Negotiations. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 65, no.1, January/February 2009.

BUZAN, Barry, de WILDE, Jaap, WAEVER, Ole. *Bezpečnost: Nový rámec pro analýzu*. 1. vyd. Brno: Centrum strategických studií, 2005. 267 s. ISBN 80-903333-6-2

CLINTON, Hillary. *Interview With Vladimir Pozner* of First Channel Television, March 19, 2010. URL <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/03/138712.htm>>

COLLINS, John M. *Military Strategy. Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives*. Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002. xvi, 333 s. ISBN 15-74884-301

CRIST, David. *The Twilight Wars: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran*. New York: Penguin, 2013. 655 s. ISBN 978-1-101-57234-4.

DOBBINS, James et al. *Coping with a nuclearising Iran*. Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, National Security Research Division, 2011. XXVI, 156 s. ISBN/EAN: 978-0833-058-652

DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*. Vyd. 2. Praha: Portál, 2010. 220 s. ISBN 978-80-7367-721-3.

FRADKIN, Hillel. *Why Sunnis Fear Shiites. The true nature of the Syrian conflict – and the Middle East's*. Commentary, Vol. 136, No. 5, December 2013, s. 24–27. URL <www.commentarymagazine.com/article/why-sunnis-fear-shiites/>

GIBSON, Bryan R. *The Long Road to Tehran. The Iran Nuclear Deal in Perspective*. London School of Economic, LSE Ideas, 2015. 54 s.

HAGAN, Kenneth J., BICKERTON, Ian J. *Unintended consequences: the United States at war*. Reaktion Books, 2007. 223 s. ISBN 978-186-1893-109

HEINONEN, Olli, HENDERSON, Simon. *Nuclear Kingdom: Saudi Arabia's Atomic Ambitions*. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. March 27, 2014.

HENDEL, Yoaz. Iran's Nukes and Israle's Dilema. *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 19, issue 1, Winter 2012, s. 31–38. ISSN: 1073-9467
URL <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=446b639e-90ce-4683-9590-793f01a08081%40sessionmgr13&vid=2&hid=25&bdata=Jmxhbmc9Y3Mmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#db=a9h&AN=67423752>>

HUNTLEY, Wade L., *Rebels without a Cause: North Korea, Iran and the NPT*. *International Affairs*. 2006, Vol. 82, No. 4, s. 723-742.

EL HUSSEINI, Rola, Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria. *Third World Quarterly*. 2010, Vol. 31, No.4, s. 803-815.

JAVEDANFAR, Meir. *Deconstructing Obama in Tehran*. 7 Nov 2008.
URL <<http://middleeastanalyst.com/2008/11/07/iran-obama/>>

JOHNSON, Alan. Bibi's Bomb: The Iranian Bomb Is No Joke. *World Affairs*. January/February 2013.
URL <<http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/bibi%E2%80%99s-bomb-iranian-threat-no-joke>>

KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*. Congressional Research Service, October 1, 2014.
URL <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32048.pdf>>

KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*. Congressional Research Service, January 6, 2010.
URL <<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/135893.pdf>>

KATZMAN, Kenneth. *Iran's Foreign Policy*. Congressional Research Service, November 25, 2015.
URL <<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R44017.pdf>>

KINZER, Stephen. *Iran, the Saudis, and the new "Great Game"*. The New York Times. 20 Oct 2011.
URL: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/21/opinion/21ihtedkinzer21.html?ref=stephenkinzer>>

KISSINGER, Henry. *Umění diplomacie: od Richelieua k pádu Berlínské zdi*. Vyd. 3. Praha: Prostor, 1999. 946 s. Obzor; sv. 7. ISBN 80-7260-025-7.

KOŘAN, Michal. Jednopřípadová studie. In DRULÁK, Petr a kol. *Jak zkoumat politiku: kvalitativní metodologie v politologii a mezinárodních vztazích*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Portál, 2008. 255 s. S. 29–60, ISBN 978-80-7367-385-7.

McDANIEL, Richard. *No "Plan B": U.S. Strategic Access in the Middle East and the Question of Bahrain*. The Brookings Institution. Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence Policy Papers, 2013.

MORGENTHAU, Hans J. a THOMPSON, Kenneth W., ed. *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace*. Brief ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. ISBN: 978-0072895391

PARSI, Trita. *Why D.C. is wrong to discredit Iran's new president*. Reuters, June 28, 2013.
URL <<http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2013/06/28/why-d-c-is-wrong-to-discredit-irans-new-president/>>

PARSI, Trita. *A Single Roll of the Dice : Obama's Diplomacy With Iran*. Yale Univ Press, 2012. 281 s. ISBN 978-0-300-16936-2

PEDATZUR, Reuven. How Obama changed the paradigm of U.S.-Israel relations. *Haaretz*, Nov 1, 2011.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.com/culture/books/how-obama-changed-the-paradigm-of-u-s-israel-relations-1.393203>>

POSCH Walter. *The EU and Iran: a tangled web of negotiations*. In POSCH, Walter (ed.) *Iranian Challenges*. Chailot Paper Nr. 89. Paris, Institute for Security Studies, 2006.

URL <<http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp089.pdf>>

PŠEJA, Pavel, ed. a BLAŽEK, Tomáš. *Přehled teorií mezinárodních vztahů*. 1. vyd. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Mezinárodní politologický ústav, 2005. 160 s. Studie; sv. č. 36. ISBN 80-210-3837-3.

REIFOWITZ, Ian. *President Obama Must Seize the Moment on Iran*. Huffington Post, Oct 23, 2013.

URL <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ian-reifowitz/president-obama-must-seize_b_3805084.html>

RIGI, Jakob. Iran at the crossroads of democracy and dictatorship. *Focaal. Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 63 (2012), s. 129-145.

SAGAN, Scott D. Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb. *International Security*. Vol. 21, no. 3. (Winter, 1996–1997), pp. 54–86.

URL <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/20278/Why_Do_States_Build_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf>

SAVYON, Ayelet. *Discussion in Iran on Possible Dialogue with U.S.* Washington, MEMRI (Middle East Media Research Institute) Inquiry and Analyses Series, no. 477, Dec 3, 2008.

URL <<http://www.memri.org/report/en/print3081.htm>>

SHARP, Paul. *Diplomatic theory of international relations*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2009. xi, 339 s. ISBN 978-052-1760-263

SOFAER, Abraham D. *Taking on Iran : strength, diplomacy and the Iranian threat / foreword by George P. Shultz*. Stanford, California : Hoover Institution Press publication ; No. 637, 2013. xv, 182 s. ISBN 978-0817-916-343.

SPYER, Jonathan. *Confidence Game: Losing American Support, the Gulf States Scramble*. The Tower Magazine, issue 10, January 2014.

URL <<http://www.thetower.org/article/confidence-game-losing-american-support-the-gulf-states-scramble/>>

The Iran Nuclear Negotiations Israel and the U.S. Congress. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, University of California Press. Vol. 44, No. 4 (Summer 2015), s. 68-92.

The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. *Nuclear Iran*. Updated Nov 2014.

URL <<http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/iran/nuclear/>>

TIRMAN, John. *The Battle for Iran*. NIAC, National Iranian-American Council, NIAC Memo, 30 Nov 2008.

URL

<http://act.niacouncil.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5560&security=1&news_iv_ctrl=1064>

WALT, Stephen. Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1985. p. 3 – 43.

WALTZ, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*. Long Grove : Waveland Press, 2010. 251 s. ISBN 1577-666-704.

WILLIAMS, Brock R., DONNELLY, Michael J. *U.S. International Trade: Trends and Forecasts*. Congressional Research Service, October 19, 2012.

YASIN, Kamal Nazer. *Iran: Reacting to Obama*. ISN, The International Relations and Security Network, ETH Zurich, Dec 3, 2008.

URL <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=94371&lng=en>>

ZANOTTI, Jim. *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*. Congressional Research Service, July 31, 2014.

URL < <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33476.pdf>>

b) Secondary sources: periodical

Accord Reached With Iran to Halt Nuclear Program. The New York Times, Nov 23, 2013.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/middleeast/talks-with-iran-on-nuclear-deal-hang-in-balance.html>>

An Iranian official urges the US President-elect to distance himself from Washington's current stance towards Iran to implement his slogan. Press TV, Tehran, Iran, Fri Nov 28, 2008.

URL <<http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/76808.html>>

Bipartisan Support, With Caveats, for Obama on Iraq Airstrikes. The New York Times, Aug 8, 2014.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/09/us/politics/bipartisan-support-with-caveats-for-obama-on-iraq-airstrikes.html>>

Clapper: Iran Ready for Nuclear Breakout. Commentary Magazine, Jan 29, 2014.

URL <<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/01/29/clapper-iran-ready-for-nuclear-breakout/>>

Clinton: Obama 'Irresponsible and Naive'. ABC News, July 24, 2007.

URL < <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=3409544>>

Clinton: Chinese human rights secondary to economic survival. The Telegraph, 20 Feb 2009.

URL < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/4735087/Hillary-Clinton-Chinese-human-rights-secondary-to-economic-survival.html>>

Congress under Israel lobby 'trying to stop Obama over Iran deal', Press TV, Tehran, Iran, Oct 21, 2014.

URL <<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/10/21/383037/congress-hindering-us-deal-with-iran/>>

Der Albtraum der Welt. Stern, zveřejněno 15. 7. 2009.

URL <<http://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/iran-und-die-atombombe-der-albtraum-der-welt-706336.html>>

Good Morning, Mr. President! What Europe Wants from Obama. Spiegel Online, 11. 5. 2008.

URL <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/good-morning-mr-president-what-europe-wants-from-obama-a-588190-druck.html>>

Henry Kissinger: Iran 'A Bigger Problem Than SIS'. Huffington Post, 9 Jun 2014.

URL <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/06/henry-kissinger-iran-isis_n_5777706.html?&ncid=tweetInkushpmg00000016>

حزب الله: اتفاق ايران النووي، انتصار نموذجي وإنجاز عالمي نوعي

Hezbollah: Iran's nuclear treaty, a typical triumph of global and qualitative success.

Al Alam International News Channel. 25 Nov 2013.

URL <<http://www.alalam.ir/news/1538139>>

Impact of Iran Sanctions Widens. The New York Times, April 3, 2012.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/04/world/middleeast/impact-of-iran-sanctions-widens.html>>

Iran and US close in on historic nuclear deal at Vienna talks. The Guardian, Nov 16, 2014.

URL <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/16/iran-us-historic-nuclear-deal-vienna>>

Iran and world powers reach interim deal on nuclear program. Haaretz, Nov. 24, 2013.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.559751>>

Iraq asks US for air strikes on ISIL rebels. Al Jazeera, Jun 19, 2014.

URL <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/iraq-asks-us-air-strikes-isis-rebels-201461815413488674.html>>

Iraq crisis exclusive: US rules out military action until Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki stands down.

The Independent, Jun 19, 2014.

URL <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-crisis-exclusive-us-rules-out-military-action-until-pm-nouri-almaliki-stands-down-9547311.html>>

Iran Has the Bomb. American Thinker, Feb 20, 2014.

URL <http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2014/02/iran_has_the_bomb.html>

Iran Nuclear Pact Faces an Array of Opposing Forces. The New York Times, Nov 16, 2014.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/world/middleeast/nuclear-deal-with-iran-runs-into-obstacles-.html>>

Iran nuclear talks: Now or never for a deal? Nov 17, 2014.

URL <<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/11/17/iran-nuclear-talksexplainer.html>>

Iran ramps up food imports via Turkish banks. Reuters, Mar 23, 2012.

URL <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/23/us-iran-ports-food-idUSBRE82M0R520120323>>

Iran urges talks on equal footing. Press TV, Tehran, Iran, Sun Nov 30, 2008.

URL <<http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/76977.html>>

Israel says Iran tested nuclear weapons in military complex. Reuters / Al Arabiya News, Sept 24, 2014.

URL <<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/09/24/Israel-says-Iran-military-to-test-nuclear-weapons.html>>

Israel's Netanyahu Arrives in Washington for First Meeting With Obama. The Washington Post, May 18, 2009.

URL <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/17/AR2009051701888.html>>

Israel's Netanyahu calls Iran deal 'historic mistake'. The Washington Post, Nov 204, 2013.

URL <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-says-iran-deal-makes-world-more-dangerous/2013/11/24/e0e347de-54f9-11e3-bdbf-097ab2a3dc2b_story.html>

Jewish Virtual Library - 2008 U.S. Presidential Campaign: Barack Obama.

URL <<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/US-Israel/Obama.html>>

Kayhan. Daily newspaper.

URL <<http://kayhan.ir/>>

Kerry builds support at the UN for anti-IS coalition. Channel News Asia, 19 Sept 2014.

URL <<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/kerry-builds-support-at/1371824.html>>

Kerry wants flexible military commitment against ISIL. USA Today, Dec 9, 2014.

URL <<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/12/09/kerry-seeks-open-ended-military-force-vs-isil/20154751/>>

Mail bonding. The Guardian, 8 Nov 2008.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/08/iran-usa>

Netanyahu rooting for Republicans in U.S. midterm elections. Haaretz, 3 Nov 2014.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.624228>>

Netanyahu's foreign policy speech at Bar Ilan. Haaretz, Jun. 14, 2009.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/full-text-of-netanyahu-s-foreign-policy-speech-at-bar-ilan-1.277922>>

No Evidence Iran Building Nuclear Weapons : Mohamed ElBaradei. The Associated Press, 28 Oct 2007.

URL <<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article18636.htm>>

Obama confesses: 'We don't have a strategy yet' for Islamic State. The Washington Times, Aug 28, 2014.

URL <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/aug/28/obama-admits-isil-dilemma-we-dont-have-strategy-ye/>>

Obama Envisions New Iran Approach. The New York Times, Nov 2, 2007.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/02/us/politics/02obama.html>>

Obama, Iran's Rouhani hold historic phone call. Reuters, Sept 28, 2013.

URL <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/28/us-un-assembly-iran-idUSBRE98Q16S20130928>>

Obama is a true friend, Israelis misunderstood his outreach to Arab world. Ha'aretz, July 11, 2013.

URL <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.535064>>

Obama's Evolving Position on Talking to Iran. ABC News, Jun 4, 2008.

URL <<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2008/06/obamas-evolving/>>

Obama's Remarks at Aipac. The New York Times, June 4, 2008. (Aipac, American Israel Public Affairs Committee).

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/us/politics/04text-obama-aipac.html>>

On the Middle East. The Guardian, Saturday 8 November 2008.

URL <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/08/iran-usa>>

President Obama Speaks to Press. CNN, August 28, 2014.

URL <<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/140828/qmb.02.html>>

Rahm Emanuel and Arab Perceptions. Huffington Post, 25 May 2011.

URL <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-zogby/rahm-emanuel-and-arab-per_b_143976.html>

Supporters of violence fail anti-terror leadership: Rouhani. IRNA, Islamic Republic News Agency. Sept 25, 2014.

URL <<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/2738703/>>

The World; Nuclear Ambitions Aren't New for Iran. The New Your Times, June 22, 2003.

URL <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/22/weekinreview/the-world-nuclear-ambitions-aren-t-new-for-iran.html>>

U.S. Eases Bite of Penalties Against Iran. The Wall Street Journal, July 25, 2013.

URL <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324110404578628291927822424>>

U.S., Iran may extend nuclear talks. The Washington Times, Nov 23, 2014.

URL <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/nov/23/us-iran-may-extend-nuclear-talks>>

US-led coalition against ISIL, political stunt: Iran MP. Press TV, Tehran, Iran, Oct 7, 2014.

URL <<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/10/07/381335/antiisil-coalition-political-stunt/>>

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel speaks during a press briefing at the Pentagon: Islamic State threat 'beyond anything we've seen'. Reuters, Aug 21, 2014

URL <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/21/us-usa-islamicstate-idUSKBN0GL24V20140821>>

Talking it out with enemies is often best tack. Chicago Tribune, Tuesday, July 31, 2007.

URL <http://blogs.chicagotribune.com/news_columnists_ezorn/2007/07/talk.html>

Terrorism cannot be eradicated by military action. Islamic Republic of Iran's Presidency website. Sept 25, 2014.

URL <<http://www.president.ir/en/81304/preview?term=obama>>

White House insists James Clapper will not lead NSA surveillance review. The Guardian, Aug 13, 2013.

URL <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/13/white-house-james-clapper-nsa-surveillance-review>>

Why does President Obama treat his friends as enemies, and his enemies as friends? The Jerusalem Post, Dec 11, 2014.

URL <<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Why-does-President-Obama-treat-his-friends-as-enemies-and-his-enemies-as-friends-381592>>

Why give Iran a reason not to fear a military attack? The Washington Post, Nov 18, 2010. URL

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp>