

# **The Geopolitics of Azerbaijan: From Rivalry to Partnership between U.S. and Iranian Interests**

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# Abstract

This thesis analyzes the recent warming of relations between the United States and Iran, and most importantly how these processes will affect the United States foreign policy in South Caucasus, particularly in Azerbaijan. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the relationship between the United States and Iran has been extremely hostile. The reasons for such a belligerent relationship were the Iranian Hostage Crisis when a group of students who were active supporters of the Islamic Revolution in Iran seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 and Tehran's nuclear program which the U.S. perceived as a threat to the U.S. national security and international peace. Since 2012 six international mediators started talks with Iran in order to solve the Iranian nuclear problem. Recently in Lausanne parties reached a framework nuclear deal with Iran which should be completed by 30 June, 2015. The thesis will argue that reaching a final agreement between Iran and the U.S. would have two main negative aspects in the foreign policy of the United States towards Azerbaijan.

Keywords: The U.S., Foreign Policy, Nuclear Program, Azerbaijan

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The end of the "cold war" and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought profound changes in the global system of international relations and a number of regional subsystems. After the cold war, the U.S has been involved in the democratization process and economic developments in the South Caucasus. This region is certainly a zone of intersection of the interests and a foreign object of the influence of such neighboring states as Russia, Iran and Turkey. Although the U.S. was a geographically far and comparatively new, non-traditional actor in this region paralleled to Russia, Iran and Turkey and other global actors in the world of International Relations, it could establish itself as one of the main powers and became active in the political affairs of the region. Initially, the U.S. foreign policy toward the region was unclear because of the sudden collapse of the USSR. To accept the political and economic independence of the newly independent post-soviet states was very difficult for American analysts, as they have become accustomed to thinking of the USSR as a single element. In the mid-1990s, energy affairs became a reason of the U.S. interest in the region. While the strategic importance of the South Caucasus had been noticed on 11 September, 2001, it was not a major concern in the making of U.S. policy until then. Joining of Azerbaijan to the fight against international terrorism made the South Caucasus one of the main building blocks of the prosecution of the global war on terrorism. Nevertheless, historically the region was closely linked to its neighbors, which in different periods of history played a crucial role. Location of the South Caucasus in the periphery of Russia, Turkey and Iran made this region an arena of struggle between these three countries. Furthermore, Azerbaijan in

the South Caucasus region, a country which is rich in various mineral and energy resources and being situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and having the transportation and communications corridor between East and West raises the importance of the South Caucasus.

Nowadays, when the much of international attention focused on a recent escalation of Russia-Ukraine conflict, concern about dangerous developments in terrorist activities in the Republic of Yemen, ISIS among others, the agreement between Iran and the "six" world powers (Russia, China, France, Germany, UK, USA) is no less important for the world of politics and security, in particular for the South Caucasus region. On January 20, 2014, "Big Six" and Iran signed an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program and it was a major milestone in warming relations between these countries and Iran. Nevertheless, the most interesting thing is that, unlike the agreement signed by the parties on 24 November 2013 on nuclear program, the text is kept secret from the public. Such warming of relations between the United States and Iran will have profound changes not only in western politics but also in the political life of the region as a whole. The thesis analyzes the possible consequences of normalization of relations between the United States and Iran. Aiming to contribute into the theoretical discussions in this field, the proposed research addresses the following main question: How will recent improvements in the U.S.-Iran relations affect the U.S. foreign policy in Azerbaijan, and what impact will this have on Azerbaijan? According to Congressman Dan Burton (2013), Azerbaijan is a strategic partner and ally of the US in the Caucasus. The stability of the Azerbaijani economy, a stable exchange rate and integration of Azerbaijan into the international community as a partner of NATO is a strong indicator of strategic partnership based on shared interests and values, which means that Azerbaijan is a partner and the leading country in the South Caucasus.

## **Structure:**

Chapter 1 is the literature review related to the foreign policy of the United States towards South Caucasus specifically Azerbaijan and Iran. Secondly, I describe a methodological and theoretical approach to study the strategic importance of Azerbaijan for the United States. To analyze strategic significance of Azerbaijan I employ content analysis and discourse analysis as a method, and center-periphery approach as a theoretical framework. Chapter 2 starts with some historical background about Azerbaijan followed by information about the U.S. relations to Azerbaijan and Iran separately. I analyze U.S.-Azerbaijan relations in three different phases in chronological order, beginning with the U.S. energy diplomacy, continuing with the U.S. security diplomacy and concluding with U.S.-Azerbaijan relations in the past 5 years. I investigate U.S.-Iran relations on the period of hostile relations between Iran and the U.S. and then following with the analysis of the period of the gradual warming. In chapter 3, I analyze official press releases, government documents, government positions, speeches from the three countries, the US, Iran and Azerbaijan. Chapter 4 is the concluding part of the thesis.

### **1.1 Literature review**

It should be noted that there is a considerable amount of theoretical works on the U.S. foreign policy in the South Caucasus region. The U.S. foreign policy towards South Caucasus countries is not unambiguous. The U.S. foreign policy in varying degrees was reflected in the studies of foreign and Russian analysts and scientists, which can be divided into the following 2

groups: Western, including American researchers of themselves; and Russian and CIS scientists. Such prominent researches as Thomas De Waal, Charles King, S. Cornell, A. Cohen, F. Starr, L. Fuller and others were engaged in studying the development of Caucasian countries, including in the context of American foreign policy. One of the main research centers dealing with the study of international relations in the region is the Central Asia-Caucasus institute (CACI) which was founded by F. Starr at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington. This Institute and the Atlantic Council of the United States in 2001 published a full study in which they sought to identify the actual content of the priorities of the U.S. in Central Asia and South Caucasus, to compare American interests with national interests in the region with such countries as Russia, Turkey, Iran and China. Analysis of various aspects of the U.S. foreign policy in the South Caucasus region presented in the works of such Russian researches as Lebedeva (2009), Barabanov (2009), Hajiyeu (2001), Muradyan (2000) and others.

Such scholars as J. Nichol (2011), A. Jafalian (2011) and G. Tracey (2012) covered the U.S. foreign policy in South Caucasus from the security perspective, while other authors such as McPherson et al (2009), J. Bugajski (2008), Ebel et al (2000) focused on the energy policy of the United States in the region. However, one of the popular books in the field of political science and international relations that this thesis is based on is the "The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives". This thesis employs insights from one of the most influential members of the US political elite Zbigniew Brzezinski. He analyzes the political situation of the current decade in the world, and especially in the Eurasian continent. In his book, Brzezinski outlined his vision for the fall of communism in the USSR. His strategic plan was expansion of the U.S. influence and its European partners in the Eurasian continent to Central Asia. In his book, Azerbaijan gains important geopolitical weight described by Brzezinski as



“important ‘cork’ controlling access to the ‘bottle’ that contains the riches of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia” (Kleveman, 2004).

Another book that influenced the ideas in this research is *The Geostrategic Triad*, which is also written by Zbigniew Brzezinski. He openly identifies the United States as a modern imperial hegemon with the power that any country can catch up in the next twenty-five years. Even though Brzezinski considers South Caucasus as an important geopolitical region, he also thinks that the whole region is very fluid. Brzezinski (2009) claims that “nor should one ignore the reality that there are serious – though not war-threatening – geopolitical conflicts of interest between the U.S. and the Russian Federation. The bottom line is that Mr. Putin resents and wants in some fashion to reverse the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Gaining control over Ukraine would restore in effect an imperial Russia, with the potential to ignite conflicts in Central Europe. Subduing Georgia would cut the west’s vital energy connection (the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline) to the Caspian Sea and to Central Asia. Azerbaijan then would have no choice but to submit to Moscow’s control”.

Also, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the Iranian nuclear dilemma and the response of the U.S. to it. The book “*The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*” by Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz is one of the important books about nuclear proliferation. One of the main concerns of the authors is the question about the consequences of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In an astute debate between Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, we can see different viewpoints regarding main question of the book “What will the spread of nuclear weapons do to the world?” (2013:3). Waltz’s main conclusion of his arguments is that if nuclear weapons spread gradually then it is welcomed, while his opponent Sagan categorically rejects this point of view. Scott Sagan considers Iran as a typical case which main goal of obtaining nuclear weapon is to deter an attack from its main rivals Israel and the United States (2006:47).

The U.S. concern regarding Iran's nuclear program covered in the mainstream media and recent publications, including journals *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *National Interest*, *The New York Times* and others mainly supported Obama's desire to solve this problem peacefully. On the other hand, political elite was divided in their opinion. Brzezinski addressed an open letter supporting this process; moreover, other well-known personalities such as Former U.S. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Former secretary of state Madeleine Albright also appealed to Congress with an open letter in support of President Obama's Iran policy. Furthermore, the framework of an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program was welcomed by Hilary and Bill Clinton. In contrast, there are groups who are really skeptical about the nuclear program deal.

In conclusion, aforementioned scholars studied the South Caucasus region systematically from various angles. The above studies and recent publications on the Iranian nuclear problem, while focusing only on how it might affect bilateral relations between Iran and the U.S. and relations with the U.S. big rivals such as China and Russia, do not address the main question of how it will change relations of the U.S. with South Caucasus, specifically with Azerbaijan.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical grounding of the proposed thesis will rely on the center-periphery model. It is one of the popular approaches in the fields of international relations and political science. According to Busygina, every phenomenon and each process has its center and periphery, determined by the level of development with more developed center and less developed periphery (2012:21). The main features of the "center - periphery" theory was originally developed in the framework of special geopolitical concept. It was given in the writings of the founder of the

Anglo-American school of geopolitics Halford Mackinder, who was by using the concepts "center" and "periphery" made a comprehensive analysis of the global geopolitical situation (Mackinder, 1904). He was also developed the first model of the "center - periphery". Later in the 1920s-1940s Haushofer continued to study this approach and developed the idea of pan-regions or spheres (Klinghoffer 2006). Mackinder-Houshofer's models served as the basis to develop a large number of geopolitical concepts – Nicholas Spykman (1944), Immanuel Wallerstein (1979), S. Cohen (1994) and others, where the main object of study was analyzed through the geopolitical concept "center-periphery".

There are different concepts in the research of periphery in international relations and political discussions. Galtung's model of center-periphery is quite applicable in the case of Azerbaijan. The concept of the periphery in Galtung's center-periphery model is damaging, where he presents center-periphery model as a "structural theory of imperialism". According to Galtung "the world consists of Center and Periphery nations; and each nation, in turn, has its centers and periphery" (1971:81). In this context, imperialism is understood as a different form of control, where the center of the center sees the center of the periphery as some kind of connection to establish mutual ties between both (Coppieters et al, 1998:47). Galtung classifies imperialism into different groups such as political, economic, military, communication or cultural (1971:87). As mentioned earlier, Azerbaijan has always historically been the focus of attention of such empires as Russia and Iran, and now the United States. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the South Caucasus became an arena of geopolitical struggle. Azerbaijan is the only country in the South Caucasus region where the interests of such countries as Russia, Turkey and Iran intersect. Like the rest of the South Caucasus countries Azerbaijan was as part of the Soviet Union until 1991. After the fall of the Soviet Union Azerbaijan was on the periphery of the West's attention, which were disappointed by the recent maneuvering of Turkey.

Another model of center-periphery approach that can be applied to Azerbaijan is periphery as a bridgehead. In this approach the particular region is seen as a linkage between states or continents (Coppieters, 2006:5). Not only economically, but also from a military point of view, the peripheral position of Azerbaijan in the West have been seen as a springboard for Western interests. For a long time Azerbaijan was seen for the U.S. administrations as a bridgehead that needed protection against Russia and Iran.

Moreover, Lipset and Rokkan cleavage-theory is also appropriate in explaining the politics of the South Caucasus region, as the whole region is very much defined by religious and ethnic cleavages. According to Lipset and Rokkan there are four types of cleavages: center vs periphery, state vs church, land vs industry, worker vs owner (Hughes & Gordon, 2002, p.7). Georgia's breakaway republics, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, also ongoing ethnic conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region are the crucial cleavages in the South Caucasus region.

### **1.3 Methodology and method**

This thesis is based on the qualitative research method. Qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis provide a method of assessing and understanding future perspectives of American approach towards Azerbaijan.

#### **1.3.1 Content analysis**

Content analysis is one of the most common tools for studying textual information in qualitative research. The importance of this method is identifying and fixing certain items of text systematically, quantification of the data and interpretation of the results in order to evaluate and

predict policies or actions of actors in world politics. The term content-analysis was first used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in American journalism to study the content of advertising and promotional media publications. However, in the field of political studies content analysis was first used by the American political scientist H. Lasswell and his associates, who studied the promotional materials of the Second World War.

Currently, content analysis is widely used research technique (Mitchel, 1967:230) in business and political analytics, in the interests of the security forces and so on.

Content analysis will assist to analyze particular documents and assess its results objectively. Mayring's model of qualitative content analysis will be the main approach in assessing abovementioned consequences. Mayring mentions that almost all researches have both quantitative and qualitative aspects. However, his main goal is "to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis for a more qualitative text interpretation" (Mayring, 2000 p.3). According to Mayring, there are two kinds of category such as inductive and deductive category that might be applied in text analysis (2010). Application of the inductive category of content analysis will help to reveal the main goals and principles used in data and analyze them in order to get broad information on possible future scenarios. Inductive approach requires researcher to find out the main points or ideas, the most significant for the purposes of research.

### **1.2.2 Discourse analysis**

The term discourse may be described in different ways and it sometimes ascribed to any kind of communicated information. However, its meaning will definitely differ according to the context where it is used. These things which can go together with the act of communication are linked to form phrases, sentences and statements. According to one of the most prominent

discourse analysts, Van Dijk, discourse is used to describe verbal practices from public speaking acts to expressing different philosophical ideas. The term discourse analysis is used in numerous approaches in the relevant literature. According to Paltridge (2012), the term discourse analysis was first introduced as a way of studying connected speech and writing in 1952 by Zellig Harris. The main focus of Harris was investigation of linguistic and non-linguistic connections beyond grammar, and Paltridge explained the analysis of discourse as a study of the context emphasizing its social and cultural relation to the text.

There are different kinds of discourse which may be considered by different characteristics. The main thing is how to distinguish all those features and how to study them. Critical Discourse Analysis will be a model in understanding and analyzing the possible consequences in the relations between countries. According to Van Dijk, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a “type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (1993:249). However, the word critical itself stimulates that researchers or experts should be careful when they are trying interpret the particular discourse.

## **Data:**

The thesis is based on the study of wide range of sources - official documents, speeches of political leaders, various scientific papers and publications. Various types of sources and literature were used for analysis of future relations of the U.S. with Azerbaijan. The first group is made up of sources of bilateral and multilateral international treaties and agreements between the U.S. and Iran. The second group is reports, speeches and interviews of heads of Azerbaijan, Iran

and U.S. The analysis of these materials makes it possible to obtain information about the position of the leaders of these states. The third group consisted of the articles published in the leading journals of foreign policy and global affairs, also materials published in various media. Despite the political partisanship and bias of most of today's media, it should not be considered as ineffective.

# Chapter 2

## U.S.-Azerbaijan and U.S.-Iran Relations

### 2.1 Historical Background

The history of present-day territory of Azerbaijan goes back to the Paleolithic (Aliyarli, 2009:12). Due to its geography, Azerbaijan has been located at the crossroad of different cultures and religions. Moreover, its past had always been related to the history of great empires and the last two century of this land is formed in the context of the clashes of Russian and Persian empires. All of these great power politics had shaped the modern day history of Azerbaijan.

After the collapse of Nadir's Empire in 1747 the present-day territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Northern-West part of Iran were shattered into tiny khanates. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire and the newly created Qajars state began to invade the khanates. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, these two empires fought over the Azerbaijani khanates and with the Gulistan and Turkmanchay (1828) treaties, Azerbaijan was divided into two parts (Ismailov, 2007). Russia invaded the North and Persia invaded the South (Necefova, 2010). From that period of time, the policies of these two empires created two different Azerbaijan.

In 1918 Russian Azerbaijan declared its independence from the empire and formed a parliamentary secular republic, but just two years later Bolshevik Russia invaded the newly created republic and Azerbaijan formally entered the USSR as the Azerbaijan SSR. Moreover, in 1917 national liberation movement led by Sattarkhan and Khiyabani started in South Azerbaijan and in April 1920 they created National Government which was destroyed by Tehran later.



Furthermore, in November 1945 Jafar Pishevari led movement declared the independence from Iran with the help of the Soviet army but this government ceased to exist a year later (Ismayilova, 2010)

Northern Azerbaijan had been greatly influenced by the Russian and then Soviet policies. Firstly, after 1828 the ethnic composition of Azerbaijan changed in favor of Christians, mainly Armenians. The fifth article of the Turkmanchay agreement provided large social and economic privileges for Christians, who intended to migrate to the Russian Empire (Yuzefovich, 1869:185). Moreover, the Soviets attitude to Azerbaijan was based on the principle that “they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented” (Marx, 2014), and this was the same approach which Edward Said described in his “Orientalism” that the Oriental [here Azeris] are “...suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth” (Said, 1977:150). Thus in the first years of Azerbaijan SSR only foreigners ruled the country and throughout the existence of the Soviet Empire, Russians always played key roles in the leadership of the Azerbaijan SSR. Main orders came from Politburo, Moscow and the local government of the Azerbaijan SSR had to obey those rules. Most Azeri top officials, such as Imam Mustafayev, the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party of the Azerbaijan SSR, were accused of nationalism and expelled from the membership of the Party, because he wanted to provide the preference of Azeri language over Russian in Azerbaijan SSR (Ismayilli, 2009).

After the second independence of Azerbaijan from Russia/USSR in 1991, Russia and USA still compete with each other over the influence in the region. In the first years of independence, the government of Azerbaijan tried to build a strong relationship with the West, especially with the United States. At the same time the young government of Azerbaijan involved in the war with Armenia over Nagorno Karabakh, which was one of the most infamous legacy of the Soviet Union. According to Bayramov, because of the Russian interference in the domestic

affairs of Azerbaijan and its help to separatist movements in South Caucasus, Azerbaijan could not build a strong governmental structure and stability inside the country.

Iran also has a great influence in Azerbaijan because even today Iran wants to see the Republic of Azerbaijan as its own “ostan”. Approximately more than 20 million ethnic Azeris live in Iran and most of them are populated in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Zanjan, Ardabil and Hamadan. Also, the majority of Muslims in Azerbaijan are Shia, thus Iran’s clerics have a significant impact on some of those people. Thus, on one hand, Iran is concerned about the potential Azeri revolt in its Northern-West part, on the other hand, Azerbaijan concerns of the activities of Iran’s clerics (Goyushov, 2008) and spies.

The government of Azerbaijan is in a very vulnerable position; there is a pressure from Iran and Russia, and on the other side of the West. However, despite all this, Azerbaijan is trying to pursue a truly independent policy in the region.

Following sub-chapter describes U.S.-Azerbaijan relations in three different stages.

## **2.2 U.S.-Azerbaijan Relations**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan began to play a special role in the economy, geopolitics and geo-strategy of the West. The formation of the three independent countries in the South Caucasus has allowed the U.S. and the EU to have a convenient foothold on the borders of Russia and Iran (Friedman, 2011:140), as well as access to the energy resources of the Caspian Sea, which account for a significant portion of the world's oil and gas reserves (Aybak, 2001:40). The geopolitical importance of Azerbaijan was associated mainly with its strategic location; it borders both Iran and Russia, and has access to the Caspian Sea. Moreover, Azerbaijan became an important logistics center, which connected the East with the West and the

North with the South, and served as a corridor for communications, transport and energy in the Eurasia (Chernyavski, 2013:190). Relations between Azerbaijan and the U.S. as mentioned before started at the beginning of 1990s. It can be analyzed in three different phases: energy policy, security policy and relations between the two countries in the past 5 years.

### **2.2.1 Energy Diplomacy**

One of the important aspects of U.S.-Azerbaijan relations is energy diplomacy, which had a great effect on the formation bilateral ties between two countries. In the post-cold war era, one of the main priorities of Washington was to increase energy security. The Caspian region which had large reserves of oil and gas was particularly of great strategic interest to such great powers as Russia, China and other western countries. Those countries could easily use economic, diplomatic and even military power to get the control over huge reserves of oil and gas (Bayramov, 2014:20). Despite the fact that official Washington was thinking of Azerbaijan as a Russian influenced country, private American oil companies were much more interested in working with Azerbaijan (Maresca, 1998). The situation of American oil investors was not easy, because of the intense rivalry with the British BP for access to the oil fields in Azerbaijan and lack of trust in the Azerbaijani side associated with Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (Ismayilzade, 2005). However, with the coming to power of Heydar Aliyev the situation completely changed after lengthy negotiations. On September 20, 1994 in Baku at the Gulistan Palace, Aliyev and major oil executives met at the ceremony of signing the contract for Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Guneshli (ACG) oil field, named by local analysts "Contract of the Century" (Amineh, 1999:170). Moreover, such development of cooperation between the Azerbaijani government and U.S. businesses contributed to the growing interest of Washington in Azerbaijan.

So in the early 1990s American foreign policy toward Azerbaijan was largely based on the energy security. Furthermore, huge and influential companies such as Amoco, Exxon, Mobil could influence the decisions in Congress. After signing contracts the U.S. government realized the importance of geo-strategic Caspian Sea basin and started to prepare special strategy toward the region. Accordingly, under pressure from Amoco, President Clinton invited the president of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev to Washington in August 1997 (Scott, 2005). Bill Clinton and Heydar Aliyev signed in Washington a joint political declaration on energy transit which was a major milestone in bilateral relations. Main topic of discussions was a new pipeline project Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum. Later, during the OSCE summit in Istanbul on November 18, 1999 presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey signed an intergovernmental agreement on transportation of Azerbaijani oil to Turkey. In addition, the agreement also was signed by the presidents of the United States Bill Clinton, Kazakhstan – Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turkmenistan – Saparmurat Niyazov (Socor, 2006). As this contract was one of the biggest agreements in the history of the country, later President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev uttered on its importance: “In signing this contract we once more demonstrated to the world that Azerbaijan is a fully independent state and that its people control their own wealth. In signing this contract we created relations with the developed countries of the world, with their biggest oil companies, and the basis for integrating Azerbaijan into the global economy and establishing a free market economy. In signing this contract, we demonstrated once more to the world that the independent Republic of Azerbaijan is a legal and democratic state” (Aliyev & Shahbazov, 1997:11)

Additionally, Clinton promised to do his best in order to withdraw the U.S. economic sanctions against government assistance to Azerbaijan. All this has brought U.S.-Azerbaijan relations to a qualitatively new level. This new partnership was very beneficial for both sides regardless the fact that American interest in the region was fully pragmatic. The United States

were supporting the financial and political independence of the young state. In addition, a major role in the improvement of bilateral relations played the U.S. oil companies which tried to advocate the interests of Caspian States in Washington, by drawing attention to natural resources and the geo-strategic importance of the Caspian Sea region, and also by putting forward the region on the agenda of the political debate in Washington to support calls to repeal Section 907 (Mehdiyeva, 2011:224).

The Caspian Sea shared between five countries, Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, initially for American policy analysts it was difficult to pursue the correct strategy towards Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as main regional powers such as Iran and Russia were forcing newly independent countries by suggesting them different routes for oil export, either via Iran or Russia respectively. Consequently, the main goal of political analysts in Washington was to prevent the dominance of big two powers in the region. However, as mentioned earlier by signing vital contracts on exporting rich hydrocarbon reserves to western markets, Azerbaijan could lessen the pressure of official Moscow and Tehran.

### **2.2.2 Security Diplomacy**

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 situation changed drastically. According to Herd and Moroney (2003), the U.S. began to show more interest in the partner states in South Caucasus and Central Asia. Although energy interests of American politicians were still strong but not as fundamental as security interest. Since 2001, U.S. and Azerbaijan have begun to strengthen strategic alliance. Two countries were cooperating together in the global war on terror (p.163).

Between 1998 and 2005 relations between United States and Azerbaijan improved in such areas as political, economic, regional, cooperation, international security and so on. Therefore, the location of the South Caucasus particularly of Azerbaijan had huge importance as it was between Russia, Iran and Turkey. Also the geographical proximity of Azerbaijan to Iraq to some degree made Azerbaijan a reliable partner of the U.S. The United States turned to various states to support them in the global war against terrorism and Azerbaijan was one of those countries. The administration of George W. Bush commented on the potential of Azerbaijan in the fight against international terrorism and its efforts in ensuring the regional peace and stability. During the 2000s as an active member of the anti-terrorist coalition, Azerbaijan has had a military, political and moral support to the U.S. military operations conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. was pleased by participation of Azerbaijan soldiers in the NATO peacekeeping troops (Nichol, 2011:31). The U.S. was supported also by Azerbaijan in “Operation Iraqi Freedom” where Azerbaijan allowed the U.S. soldiers to use its airspace (Ibrahimov, 2014:11). In addition, Azerbaijan had joined a number of conventions against international terrorism. In 2007, improved relations between two countries were apparent, important steps were taken towards the economic and military expansion. In the same year President Ilham Aliyev met Daniel Sullivan Advisor to US State Secretary in Economic and Business Affairs, Co-Chairman of US-Azerbaijan Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation, then in May 2007, the President of Azerbaijan received Frank Mermoud Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. All these facts are the indicator of good relations between two countries.

### 2.2.3 Relations between two countries in the past 5 years

Compared to the 2000s, in the first half of 2010, bilateral U.S.-Azerbaijani relations reached its lowest point ever. Mass media clearly demonstrated anti-Western and anti-American rhetoric of Azerbaijani government. Key Azerbaijani decision makers from the Azerbaijani ruling elite started making tough statements about the relations of two countries. Ali Hasanov, advisor of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, told to news agency Reuters that official Baku might "reconsider" its relationship with Washington (Antidze, 2010). Novruz Mammadov, head of the Foreign Relations Department of the presidential administration of Azerbaijan also commented on U.S.-Azerbaijan relations by mentioning that "while Washington says that its aim is to improve stability and development throughout the region, in reality U.S. policies have become increasingly pro-Armenian -- and exclusive of Azerbaijan" (Mammadov, 2010). All these statements showed that Azerbaijan is trying to pursue an independent policy despite the pressures from regional power, including the U.S. as well. However, Obama administration was not satisfied with all this. It was assumed that Armenian lobby played an important role in spoiling bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and the U.S., as there is a tremendous pressure from the Armenian lobby groups to Obama administration (Sassounian, 2010).

Another reason that worsened Azerbaijan's relations with United States was an article about alleged Aliyev family's property in Dubai. It was written that Aliyev family bought nine mansions on Palm Jumeirah in Dubai for 44 million dollars. (Hough, 2010).

Later official Washington warned the U.S. citizens in Azerbaijan. On the website of State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Baku, there is information about potential threat to Western interests which urges American citizens in Azerbaijan to "remain vigilant, particularly in public places associated with the Western community" (2011). Despite all this, the interesting fact is that the U.S. embassy or government in particular did not specify the nature of the threats.

According to Ibrahimov, one of the main reasons in declining of Azerbaijan's relationship with the U.S was criticism of official Washington on issues of human rights and democratic reforms, which official Baku considered as interference in internal affairs and the U.S. put pressure just because of its own interests in the region (2014:15). According to Freedom House, "Azerbaijan lags behind on a number of democratic indicators, such as fighting corruption, accountability and democratic control over law enforcement institutions, and participation of civil society" (2014:96). Washington also criticized the presidential election in Azerbaijan in 2013. In 2009, a Constitutional referendum was held in Azerbaijan. Following his reelection as a president in 2008, Aliyev passed a referendum which eliminated the constitutional limits for two consecutive presidential terms, paving the way for his life-long presidency. President Aliyev was re-elected for a third term in 2013.

Another quite significant reason was related to the fact that more than six months the U.S. did not appoint an ambassador to Azerbaijan. This fact also had a negative impact on relations between two countries. Moreover, Ibrahimov (2014) mentions that still there were other reasons that made official Baku skeptical about American partnership and cooperation. Another reason of dissatisfaction was the position and activities of the United States on resolving of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem as a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was one of the ethno-political conflicts which started in 1980s between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In 1992 the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 adjacent districts were occupied by Armenian forces with the help of Russia. As a result, approximately 1 million Azerbaijani people had to leave their homes.

In early 2010, the U.S. Congress agreed to support the separatist regime by allocation aid in the amount of 10 million U.S. dollars. This kind of direct relation with the separatists almost broke the last thread of relations between the two countries. However, the U.S. very quickly



realized that it will have no good result in such development of relations, and the official visit of the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in July 2010 could alleviate the tensions for a while, since the U.S. has been very concerned about the possible loss of its ally in such a strategic and rapidly changing region (2014:14-15).

Relations between the two countries are not as great as it once was about 10-15 years ago. Given the strategic significance of Azerbaijan it certainly needs to be improved. From the economic point of view Azerbaijan is a stable country among the former Soviet republics, also another important point that U.S. analysts have to take into account is that Azerbaijani authorities not willing to make any concessions regarding Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. One of the main requirements of official Baku is to get back at least seven adjacent districts around Nagorno-Karabakh in order achieve the effectiveness of the negotiations. Nevertheless, Azerbaijani authorities have to realize that unlike the Bush administration, current administration is highly sensitive to the issues of human rights, freedom of press, democracy and etc. In the last 10 years Azerbaijan tries to maintain balance with other major regional powers in the South Caucasus, such as Russia and Iran, which is makes Azerbaijan not loyal in the eyes of United States government.

### **2.3 US-Iran Relations**

After World War II, US-Iranian relations had a vital significance in the regional policy of the United States. In approximately 35 years, after the Islamic revolution of 1979, the relationship between the United States and Iran has been extremely hostile. One of the main reasons for such an unfriendly relationship was allegedly, Tehran's nuclear program. One of the main goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran was to transform the country into a regional power and

later the leader of the Islamic World. Such situation contributed to the emergence in the United States of the perception of the theocratic hostile regime which was seen as a threat to the U.S. national security and international peace. However, another reason of such hostile relations was when a group of students who were active supporters of the Islamic Revolution in Iran seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran in November 4, 1979. According to Houghton, the diplomats, their families and embassy staff were held hostage for 444 days. Despite the fact that, there was an option of an armed operation to release the hostages, Jimmy Carter insistently demanded to solve this problem in a peaceful way. The United States imposed economic sanctions against Iran and broke diplomatic relations. Iranian assets in U.S. banks were frozen and the Carter administration had imposed a ban on imports of Iranian oil. The hostages were released after a few minutes when the new president Ronald Reagan took the oath of office (2001:50). From the U.S. point of view, this was the beginning and a main reason for the decisive worsening of the bilateral relationship.

Yet, after the Cold War and the replacement of the bipolar system by unipolar, Washington was seeking for an optimal policy towards Iran. However, the U.S. policy toward the regime remained unchanged. With the election of Barack Obama as 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, the U.S. foreign policy towards Iran has reached a qualitatively new level. The same situation was in Iran, when negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program between the “Big Six” and Iran resumed in 2013 when the president in this country became Hassan Rouhani. He promised that he will do all his best in order to solve Iran’s international isolation problem.

In the following sub-chapters U.S.-Iran relations are analyzed in two subsections, firstly focusing on the period of hostile relations between Iran and the U.S. and then following with the analysis of the period of the gradual warming.

### 2.3.1 US-Iran relations after 1979

Relations between the United States and Iran were quite close and friendly after World War II. However, after the overthrow of the pro-western Shah Pahlavi in 1979 the situation completely changed (Winston, 2014:69). The main desire of the American ruling circles was to control Iran, which played a significant role in supporting the U.S. interests in the Gulf region and the Middle East. Pro-American foreign policy of Shah Pahlavi allowed the United States to have a strong foothold in post-war confrontation between the United States and the USSR. The United States used the territory of Iran to monitor southern borders of the USSR. In addition, Iran had an enormous military power which could fight against any liberation movement and thereby serve U.S. energy interests in the region (Leupp, 2012). With the release of the hostages in 1981 relations between Iran and the U.S. became relatively stable. There were specific areas of bilateral cooperation on the basis of anti-communism, and especially the United States and Iran shared common positions by condemning Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. However, this kind of cooperation did not last long (Snetkov et al, 2013:36).

Until very recently, the U.S. administrations tried to put Tehran under control, using various methods, including economic and financial sanctions. In the last decade the main cause of sanctions against Tehran was Iran's nuclear program, which allegedly aimed to build nuclear weapons in Iran (Chatterji et al, 2011:177). Despite the fact that U.S. economic sanctions and embargoes had a negative effect on Iranian economy, it could manage to adapt to these conditions. After blocking Iranian mutual settlements with other countries in dollars, Iran began using the euro in the delivery of its oil and other goods to European countries. Consequently, the U.S. started to pressure its European allies to stop purchasing Iranian petroleum products. However, this did not prevent Iran from exporting its energy reserves, the direction of oil and gas

exports changed towards India and China. After China, India became the biggest oil client of Tehran (Wroughton & Hafezi, 2015).

In addition, since sanctions on Iran were not effective, another plan of Washington was resolving the Iranian nuclear issue by force. The United States wanted to conduct a successful and quick war against Syria and then to restore order throughout whole Iran. Therefore, according to Katasonov (2014), the main goal of the United States was establishing effective control over the region of the Middle East, not the prevention Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

### **2.3.2 Negotiation process on Iran's nuclear program**

As mentioned above, there was an active discussion of the possibility of a military solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. Very few people would have predicted that the parties will find some mutually acceptable formula for the settlement of the problem. However, regardless the fact the military actions against Islamic Republic of Iran have always been on the agenda, military operations never realized.

In 2008 when Barack Obama was elected the President of the U.S., the Obama administration announced a new strategy “pivoting towards Asia” in order to contain rising China. The U.S. administration considered China as one of the main threats to the United States global position. In 2009, the Obama administration launched its first foreign initiative to “reset” its relations with Russia, especially after the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia. However, the Americans failed to achieve tangible progress in bilateral relations due to the inadequate position of the Kremlin. Nevertheless, even if Obama failed to “reset” relations with Russia, he aims to do so with Iran (Chiragov, 2014).

As numerous sanctions against Iran paralyzed its economy, Iran had to make concessions. As stated earlier, in January 20, 2014, the "Big Six" and Iran signed an agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue. In Lausanne, the parties agreed on the basic framework of the future compromise. In February 10, 2014 when Iran conducted a test of its ballistic missiles, some senators in Congress urged to include a provision limiting ballistic missiles use. Iranian reaction was opposite, saying that it cannot be included in the contract, which was also supported by negotiator Wendy Sherman by stating that ballistic question is not on the negotiation agenda and Iran can continue to work in this direction (Chiragov, 2014).

As for the nuclear program, the "Big Six" and Iran managed to first of all resolve the contradictions over the status of Iran's nuclear facilities, especially Iran's 40-megawatt heavy Arak reactor, which is capable of producing up to eleven kilograms of plutonium per year and which is enough to produce one nuclear weapon (Jones, 2014). In turn, Iran insisted that the U.S and EU sanctions mainly the ones related the supply of oil and petroleum products have to be lifted immediately. However, U.S. officials answered that sanctions cannot be lifted immediately until Iran proves the peaceful purpose of its nuclear program. In 2013, the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters that "we put these sanctions in place in order to be able to put us in the strongest position possible to be able to negotiate. We now are negotiating" (Guardian).

However, the content of the nuclear framework agreement which was signed behind closed doors is not known. The imposed sanctions made Iran to make significant concessions, in particular, reducing by two thirds the number of centrifuges used to enrich uranium, giving IAEA inspectors access to its military facilities and so on and so forth (See Appendix A). Luckily, the warming of relations between Washington and Tehran was achieved through a diplomatic solution, not by using traditional methods of force and intervention.

# Chapter 3

## Analysis and Results

Despite the fact that there is an optimistic and positive attitude about the framework deal in Lausanne on the Iranian nuclear program, there still exists certain skepticism about the full lifting of sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is very obvious that this preliminary agreement does not mean the total removal of restrictions against Iran. However, this agreement is of important political and diplomatic importance. The final results of the key parameters of a Joint Comprehensive Action Plan on Iranian nuclear program have to be concluded by June 30, 2015. A successful agreement between parties promises lifting all political and economic sanctions on Iran.

However, as mentioned earlier, analysis reveals the fact that there are two conflicting groups which do not wish to make any concessions in this process. The purpose of this chapter is to bring some light to the issue of the nuclear program between Iran and the U.S. and further consequences of the program in the case of concrete agreement between these two parties. This chapter is divided into four sections: first, the analysis of the groups that support the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear program, second, the groups that against it, third part is analysis what will happen if a final nuclear deal is agreed upon between Iran and world powers and the final fourth part is about the consequences of the American-Iranian Nuclear deal on the U.S. foreign policy in Azerbaijan and how these processes will affect Azerbaijan itself. According to Austin, one of the main arguments of those who support the negotiation process is that they believe that military solution of the nuclear program is not acceptable, as rigorous analysis of

benefits and costs shows that contemplating military actions against Iran will have “problematic consequences for global and regional stability, including economic stability” (2012:10). Those who do not support the process can be divided into several groups, those who are really skeptical about the nuclear program most likely because of their ideological views, others are people supported by Israel's Radical Right and so on. In both sides, there are lots of opinion, which considering this event either historic victory or as a big mistake.

### **3.1 Groups against nuclear program**

The United States decided that the best option to solve the problem of political backwardness in the existing Middle East regimes is the normalization of relations with Iran rather than to hope for an Arab-Israeli dialogue, which seems unreal even for inveterate optimists. A successful agreement will definitely turn Iran into a strategic partner of the United States, which will help stabilize the situation in the Middle East. Despite the fact that Iran and the six world powers have agreement on the key parameters of the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear program; there is still a group of people who express their discontent with the Iranian nuclear program. One of the main challenges of Obama Administration is the resistance of influential segments of the American and Iranian political class, as well as compulsive criticism of Israeli leaders.

Even though the U.S. and Iran agreed to conclude historic deal, sanctions against Iran will not be “revoked” until there is Iranian support for terrorism and the violation of human rights. More than twenty states in the U.S. have imposed restrictions on corporations working with Tehran. In addition such states as Kansas and Mississippi are already considering various additional sanctions against Iran. A Republican Florida State senator, Don Gaetz said that “our

investment sanctions are not tied in any way to President Obama's negotiations with the Iranians". According to him, the state government is not going to take Obama's and his entourage opinion into account (Reuters, 2015). However, if sanctions remain in place or the states will impose new additional sanctions on Iran, it might lead to a greater gap between federal and state and local governments, while preventing the federal government from signing the agreement and thus achieving a historical success. However, one should consider the fact that such issues as foreign policy and international relations are not in the competence of state governments, as the latter does have little experience in regulation of foreign affairs. Moreover, the president of the National Foreign Trade Council, William Reinsch expressed his opinion on this issue saying that "foreign policy is uniquely a case where the government needs to act with one voice" (Reuters, 2015). These imposed sanctions clearly show that it affects not only Iran but also foreign companies, as the U.S. government prohibits them to work with Iran.

Another group with which the Obama administration had to find a common language has been the congressmen who considered dialogue with Tehran as a negative step from the beginning, which in turn contributed to growing distrust between Congress and the Obama Administration when negotiations were extended twice. And it is not only the opponents from the Republican Party, but also Democrats. State legislators believe that Obama offers unacceptable concessions to Tehran just in order to achieve at least some positive result (The New York Times, 2015). Moreover, Israeli lobby has one of the powerful influences on this process. Obama once criticized members of Congress that they stand for the interests of others, rather than for the interests of their own state. In addition 47 Republican senators sent a letter to the leadership of Iran, where they state that no matter what Obama Administration promises, without the full support of Congress it would not be realized (White House, 2015).



Despite all this, Iran and the U.S. could achieve agreement. The Congressmen claimed that the agreement with Iran is an international treaty and therefore it must be approved by the Senate. Tennessee Republican, Bob Corker prepared a bill requiring the Obama administration to carry out an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program through Congress (Senate, 2015). The vote was scheduled on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. Bob Corker stated that sanctions imposed by the Senate and the House of Representatives cannot be canceled if Obama administration does not provide them with all the details of the Iranian nuclear agreement. Additionally, every 90 days Obama's administration should provide information confirming that Iran in all aspects complies with all the conditions of the agreement (Congress, 2015).

Moreover, one of the most insistent critics of the talks was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A serious attempt to disrupt the negotiation process was carried out by Israeli Prime Minister at the beginning of March, 2015 who harshly criticized negotiations in his speech in the U.S. Congress. According to Netanyahu, as Iran will still have a huge nuclear infrastructure, therefore it will manage to build easily a nuclear weapon after sanctions removal and it is not a threat only to Israel, but also for the entire region (BBC, 2015). Tehran, in turn, responded that Netanyahu's speech in Congress was “desperate attempt to impose an irrational agenda” (Al Jazeera, 2015). Netanyahu's speech is obviously situated in the ideology of intervention into internal affairs, where even Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expressed her concern as “he is interfering in our internal affairs” (Feldman, 2015). However, discursive actions of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu exposed that Israel has been deceived and they are the victims of slippery policy of the White House. In addition, it is worth noting that such an insistent interest of Israel in blocking nuclear program is mainly due to the aggressive attitude of Iran toward Israel. The main concern of the Israeli side is that the radical and aggressive Iranian regime should immediately cease to call for the destruction of Israel.

From the Iranian side, although the current Supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Khamenei initially welcomed the agreement, he still to some extent is skeptic regarding the whole negotiation process. The main goal of his recent speech which was full of skepticism was to dispel the general euphoria of Iranians regarding the removal of sanctions, which they think that will contributed to economic prosperity. In addition, Ayatollah Khamenei by giving an obvious example of events in Iraq demonstrated Iran's mistrust to the world powers. In a statement that was published on his official website, Khamenei (2015) said: "I have never been optimistic about negotiations with the U.S. and that is not because of an illusion, but because of experience in that regard. In addition he noted that the U.S. threats against Iran make all the nuclear talks doubtful". Khamenei believes that the U.S. still applies the ancient principle of "divide and rule" against the Islamic world. The Supreme leader's speeches are mainly based on the national ideology and religion. Even if he grudgingly agreed to sign an agreement on the nuclear program, Khamenei's ideological nuclear rhetoric is still revolutionary, which is, in turn, mainly based on the Islamic principles.

Although Russia is one of the members of a group of six world powers that are negotiating with Iran, it cannot be regarded as a supporter of a diplomatic solution of the Iranian nuclear issue. According to Bhalla (2015), Russia does not want that in its neighborhood Iran became the owner of nuclear weapons. However, a smooth implementation of the Iranian nuclear program and hostility between Washington and Tehran is exactly what Russia wanted, thereby preventing the United States from being seriously engaged in the territories of the former Soviet Union which are still in the sphere of influence of Russia. Russia tried all sorts of ways just to disunite the American and Iranians, for instance, offering help in the construction of new nuclear reactors made Iran more appealed to develop peaceful nuclear energy. Moreover, Russian banks helped Iran to circumvent financial sanctions. Currently, Russia is a key supplier of petroleum

products for EU, providing by far Europe's demand for natural gas and oil, respectively 29% and 37%. The re-entry of extra barrels of Iranian oil to the world oil market will eventually lead to a further decrease in oil prices and the ruble.

Additionally, one of the most concerned about final agreement over Iran's nuclear program is the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Barack Obama's Iran policy was met with considerable opposition and strong criticism from its Sunny allies. According to Coughlin (2013), in December 2013 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain called the U.S. policy in the region as "schizophrenic". Although the Gulf countries discreetly welcomed the preliminary agreement on the Iranian nuclear program between Iran and world powers, there is still ongoing tension between Iran and Arab countries, especially with Saudi Arabia. According to Boghardt (2014), the mostly Sunni Muslim monarchy accused Shiite Iran of meddling in Arab countries' internal affairs. In addition, the Iranian nuclear program aroused fears in the Arab world. Moreover, Iran's support of Syrian government strained relations between Iran and Arab countries, as the latter provides assistance the armed rebels. The United States rapprochement with Shiite Iran can lead to further rapprochement of Sunni ally of the U.S. with Israel against Iran. Besides, Arab countries can also start to build more close relations with Russia.

### **3.2 Groups supporting nuclear program**

Despite the fact that there is quite a lot of skepticism about the Iranian nuclear program, there are groups that support this idea.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani expressed his opinion regarding the bill that it is an internal affair of the United States to allow the U.S. Congress to review the nuclear deal. However, he added that "we are in talks with the major powers and not

with the Congress” (De Young et al, 2015). Answering journalists' questions, he said that “main goal in the deal is to prove to the world that all accusations leveled against the country had been unfounded and this will be the greatest achievement at international level” (The Iran Project, 2015). Over the past year, U.S. officials met at least five times with Iranian colleagues, four meetings of which have been carried out after Hassan Rouhani became a president. Despite the fact that the rhetoric of Rouhani is also based on nationalistic ideas, it is much softer than the radical style of his predecessor, Ahmadinejad.

On the other hand, President Obama could go down in the history of the United States as the President who managed to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program without firing a shot. Obama called the achievement of agreement on the Iranian nuclear program as a “historic” (Hudson, White House, 2015). On the eve of signing the preliminary agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, Barack Obama congratulated the Iranians on Nowruz – the Persian New Year. Only 30 seconds of the four-minute video was devoted to congratulation, the rest of the time President Barack Obama talked about the nuclear program (White House, 2015). Obama also stated that Iranians have a unique culture, great scientific potential, as well as an ancient tradition of statehood, which would make them a major power in the region (Doran, 2015). A relation with Iran is one of the discursively emphasized issues of Obama’s speeches. Additionally, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015, in his annual address to Congress, he mentioned that he will use his right to veto any kinds of new sanctions that might endanger the achieved progress between parties (White House, 2015).

Still, influential circles, from both the U.S. and Iran sides are not satisfied with such warming of relations. Chuck Hagel’s appointment as the head of the Pentagon after the re-election of president Obama can definitely guarantee that there are no war expectations with Iran. In addition to the State Department, head of the Pentagon as well as the representatives of the

security agencies and the President's closest senior advisors actively participate in the formation of country's foreign policy. Thus, Hagel was one of those who could directly express his thoughts in the process of negotiations. He became more popular when he openly criticized Israel and the Jewish lobby in the United States. He is the author of such controversial quote as "I'm not an Israeli senator. I'm a United States senator" (Chiragov, 2014). Before, such kind of statements would mean the end of the political career of any politician. However, after the nomination of Hagel for secretary of defense, he was reminded of its earlier thoughts. Initially, Congress postponed confirmation of Hagel's candidacy. He had to visit the main Jewish organization AIPAC in the United States, where he apologized and promised to take into account the interests and security of Israel as it was done by former heads of the Pentagon. The United States always unambiguously supported, is supporting and will support in the future the Israeli position.

However, the interesting fact is that such warming of relations between the United States and Iran is not only a product of White House individuals. This idea actively supported by other influential people and circles in the United States. In the "Iran project" which was founded in 2002 with financial support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a lot of diplomats, former ambassadors, statesmen and other influential people were as part of the "Iran project". The main goal of the project was giving an objective analysis on the policy towards Iran. In particular, one of the articles was about the possible consequences of a military solution to Iran's nuclear program. However, the authors came to the conclusion that military actions against Iran will not lead to any positive impact (Chiragov, 2014).

Azerbaijan is also one of the states that support Iran's negotiations with the West. The Azerbaijani officials mentioned that the final agreement between Iran and the "Big Six" will lead to sustainable development and peace in the region (Najafova, 2015). Although Azerbaijan

unwillingly welcomed progress in the negotiation process, Azerbaijani officials do not prefer to speak much about it.

### **3.3 Future perspective of agreement on nuclear program**

There are a number of unsolved issues between the parties which means there is no guarantee that it will end up successfully. However, there is no doubt that Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani will going to stand up staunchly for this idea and bring it up to the final agreement. It is not a secret that President Obama refers to the negotiation process as his personal mission. During the negotiation process, he demanded to be notified immediately if there is any kind of problems or obstacles that may derail the negotiation process. He made a lot of efforts in defending the nuclear talks by even confronting skeptical Congress. He attempts to justify that he received the Nobel Peace Prize for a reason. A final deal with Iran will lead to saving of the non-proliferation regime and also it will help to stabilize the Middle East region. On the other hand, critics of the Obama administrations claim that by signing an agreement with Iran Obama made a big mistake. His opponents cannot agree with Obama's opinion regarding Iran's nuclear weapons program, where he pointed out that within the Treaty of the Non-proliferation of Nuclear weapons any state has the right develop a peaceful nuclear program. The main goal of the United States was to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and they could achieve it under the framework agreement.

As it was mentioned earlier, the main goal of the "Iran project" was to achieve an agreement through a diplomatic solution, not through traditional methods of using force and intervention. If parties achieve a success in negotiations, certainly it will set a good precedent for

the future that such problems can be resolved through peaceful means in order to avoid new conflicts and destabilizations in the region. And this in turn means that the administration of Barack Obama considers Iran as an essential country in the stabilization of the Middle East region. Tehran supports terrorist groups in all regional conflicts starting from Libya to Yemen. The main reason of Tehran is just to strengthen its position in the region. Americans expect that as a result of the nuclear program negotiations Iran will achieve regional leadership in the region and Tehran will support the United States in the Middle East. In this process Americans rely on the Persians more than the radical Arabs.

However, it is important to take into account the fact that even if both parties achieve a successful final deal, it will not mean a rapprochement between Tehran and Washington on foreign policy issues. Recently in his interview with one of the most popular news magazines *Der Spiegel*, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif mentioned that “we will have differences with the United States no matter what... It’s a part of our identity, but that identity does not require conflict” (Hoffmann, 2015). The most important fact is that Iran’s possession of nuclear technology is supported by all political forces in Iran, even by those Shah’s supporters who were expelled from the country. According to Eshraghi (2015), even the most ardent opponents of the mullah’s regime such as the last ambassador of Iran to United States Ardeshir Zahedi in his interview to BBC in 2012 told “Iranians must maintain their patriotism. No matter who is in power, Iran is our country”. Akbar Etemad, who was the founder of the Atomic Energy Organization during Reza Pahlavi regime, was one of those who diligently supported the idea of uranium enrichment program. Unambiguously, the discourse of these people shows that they consider the Iranian nuclear program in the context of the nation’s interests. Even though they support the normalization of relations with the United States, they oppose any kind of agreements that can be against the national interests of Iran.

However, another question arises that how it might affect the politics of the global oil industry? For the world economy it means that the supply of petroleum products will be increased. In addition, foreign investors will invest in a country, which means that the production and export of petroleum products will be increased even more. According to Smith et al (2015), Iran has about 35 million barrels in tankers in the Persian Gulf that will be marketed in the near future. Therefore, Iran's return to the oil market can lead to the overstocking of the oil market, which in turn will cause a significant decline in oil prices. It is worth noting that except its giant oil fields Iran has almost untouched natural gas reserves. Moreover, when sanctions will be lifted, these places will definitely attract investors. On the coast of the Persian Gulf will be new LNG terminals to transship gas to European market. Furthermore, in a few years, the global gas market is expecting a large influx of cheap oil from Iran, which would reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas.

Yet, nothing prevents the signing a final nuclear deal and it is possible to solve most of the issues in the next few months. However, it is necessary not to overestimate the benefits of the deal. It definitely can change the rules of the games in international politics. As mentioned above, even if there is a successful deal between Tehran and Washington, it will not make them best friends as there are plenty issues in which countries are not accustomed to trust each other. However, even if parties do not admit, there are issues in the region that both sides have a common interest which will lead to close cooperation in the future. For example, we have seen alliance between Iran and the United States against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While the U.S. Air Force conducted air attacks against ISIS, land operations were carried out by Iran or Iranian-backed militias. In other words, the synchronization and coordination of land and air attacks between parties was an obvious indicator of close alliance.



In addition, content analysis of the interim agreement on the Iranian nuclear program revealed that there are two versions of a single contract. Although the specific content of the framework agreement signed behind closed doors is not known, except for some highlights, stated by the parties. Both parties had very serious discussions and debates over every single word in the agreement. Both the Obama and the Rouhani administrations presented the reached preliminary agreement as their victory. However, the Iranian government accused John Kerry for his statement, where he noted that the United States is ready to soften gradually the sanctions against Iran. Iranians did not like John Kerry's statement where they accused him of lying about the conditions of the contract. Thorough analysis of both documents shows that neither United States nor Iran has achieved great benefits. On the contrary, Iran has made little concessions, in particular, reduced by two thirds the number of centrifuges used to enrich uranium, also allowed IAEA inspectors access to its military facilities. Moreover, according to the document, published by the United States, Iran will remain a party to NPT over the next 25 years. However, in the document published by Iranian side, it says that Iran will temporarily fulfill the terms of the Protocol to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons after appropriate approval by the Parliament. Another example that published in the White House website (2015) says that "Iran has agreed to not build any new facilities for the purpose of enriching uranium for 15 years". However, in his interview on Iranian State TV Channel 1, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that this process will continue only for 10 years.

As mentioned earlier, despite the fact that Barack Obama considers the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear program as his own mission, however, according to Doran (2015), its conceptual basis has been developed during the presidency of George W. Bush. In the report published in December 2006 whose authors were the former secretary state James Baker and Congressmen Lee Hamilton advised President Bush to focus on four main issues, one of which

was the normalization of relations and cooperation with Islamic Republic of Iran. Nonetheless, one of the most interesting issues is that later some of those who were involved in the research team of James Baker and Lee Hamilton took the leading positions in the Barack Obama administration, for example, Denis McDonough, the White House Chief of Staff and Benjamin Rhodes, who is deputy national security advisor for strategic communication. Some experts think that Obama's Iran strategy will end if someone is elected from the Republican Party as a new president in 2016. However, it is worth noting that James Baker who was former secretary of state and who is supporting Obama's Iran's policy is the current foreign policy advisor of 2016 Republican Party Candidate Jeb Bush. It reveals the fact that such kinds of arguments are not always true.

All in all, this shows once again that the normalization of relations between the United States and Iran is not an initiative of the Obama Administration, conversely this process has very deep roots and it is in the interest of a various influential people. However, again, back to the question that was brought up earlier, what will be the outcome of this agreement to U.S.-Azerbaijani relations and generally how it will affect the overall situation in Azerbaijan?

### **3.4 Consequences of the Nuclear deal on the U.S. foreign policy in Azerbaijan**

Removal of sanctions on Iran means the return of Iran to the world market of oil and natural gas. According to Addis, Iran has 10% of world oil reserves and 20% of world gas reserves (2010:2). Yet, Iran's return to black gold market will bring prices down in the oil industry. Most likely, this process will be soft and gradual. Sanctions will be removed after the final agreement which is scheduled for the end of June, 2015. Though it is not known yet how fast the sanctions will be dropped, this might happen by the adoption of steps to reduce Iran's

nuclear program, which will take months. Moreover, it will take time to bring back the Iranian oil infrastructure to the full capacity after the years of severe embargoes. Even though oil prices will go down, it will not be as sharp as it is expected. However, what kind of effects does the lifting of sanctions against Iran will have in the region, specifically in South Caucasus?

Economically Azerbaijan is the most advantageous for cooperation among the states of the South Caucasus. Its geographical location is in the periphery of such world powers as Russia, Turkey, Iran and the West, where the interests of these powers intersect. These world powers have always been interested to secure their access to the resources of the region. Washington was seeking to take the Transcaucasian states out of the control of its main strategic rivals Tehran and Moscow, thereby getting easy access to the natural resources of the Caspian basin. In other words, by strengthening relations with Azerbaijan, the United States would be able to drive out from the region its main geopolitical rivals – Russia and Iran, becoming the only world power that controls the resources of the South Caucasus and even Central Asia. However, the U.S. and Iran could normalize bilateral relations. Such a warming of relations raises a question, how these processes will affect Azerbaijan itself? What kind of consequences would normalization of relations between the United States and Iran have on Azerbaijan, a country with great economic potential, which has rich reserves of natural resources?

Reaching a final agreement between Iran and the U.S. would have two main negative aspects in the foreign policy of the United States towards Azerbaijan. Firstly, lifting sanctions against Iran, which has about 10 percent of world oil reserves, will quickly increase production and exports of Iranian petroleum products which in turn will contribute to increasing the excess oil production on the world market. The announcement of agreement on April 2 led to further decline of the world oil prices. Brent oil became cheaper by almost 4% reaching close to 54 dollars per barrel, while WTI – by 1.8 reaching close to 50 dollars per barrel. According to

Kenneth Katzman, before tougher sanctions, Iran exported 2.5 million barrels per day, while the export dropped to 1.1 million during the period of sanctions (2015:1). Such developments can potentially cause less interest in Azerbaijani oil, which is the basis of the country's economy. The economy of Azerbaijan is mainly based on resources rather than non-resources sectors. According to Azeri Daily Analysis Group (2015), approximately 53.5% of the state budget is provided by the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ). Despite the fact that Azerbaijani experts knew that oil prices were gradually falling, they set Azerbaijani's state budget for 2015 with an average oil price at the level of \$ 90 per barrel. The recent devaluation of the Azerbaijani manat (AZN, the currency of Azerbaijan) is the evidence of the occurrence of the economic crisis in Azerbaijan. In February 21, 2015, the Central Bank of Azerbaijan devalued manat by 35% and set the official exchange rate at 1.05 AZN for 1 U.S. dollar, which was 0.78 AZN to 1 the U.S. dollar before. One of the main factors in determining the exchange rate of AZN is the oil factor. Just in case of significant changes in oil prices it will definitely affect the exchange rate of AZN. Corruption, poor management of state resources and serious irregularities in public investments affect negatively the financial and economic situation of the country. All this can have a very bad impact on further economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States. Moreover, if before the U.S. considered Azerbaijan as a main military bridgehead against Russia and Iran, as it lies between these two countries, now solving the Iranian nuclear puzzle may reduce strategic importance of Azerbaijan in the eyes of the United States. Initially the U.S. preferred to solve the Iranian nuclear program by undertaking a war against Iran, mainly by aerial bombarding Iran's nuclear facilities, where the territory of Azerbaijan could be used as a potential foothold for armed intervention against Iran. Furthermore, according to Kauzlarich (2014), hostility between the US and Iran, as well as the laws that were prohibiting American companies to have business with Iranians, was a very good reason for Azerbaijan to bring its Caspian oil and gas to world

markets. However, such normalization of relations between Iran and the U.S. has cast some doubt on the importance of the future role of Azerbaijan as main energy supplier of Europe. Consequently, this process jeopardizes all gas and oil projects of Azerbaijan.

Secondly, in case of losing its geostrategic and economic importance Azerbaijan might become more cooperative with its northern neighbor Russia, which in turn, will reduce the level of democracy. The Azerbaijan government is already under Russian pressure to join the Eurasian Union. Joining the Union means not only reducing the level of democracy, but also losing its independence in political and economic terms. All these developments will have a negative effect on the democratization process in Azerbaijan, which might cause the U.S. and Azerbaijan to move further apart in their relations. Even though the U.S. have big concerns regarding the failure by the Azerbaijani government to comply with international obligations and responsibilities in such areas as protecting human rights and promoting democracy, the Obama administration closely cooperates in order to strengthen civil society and the core values of democracy in Azerbaijan. According to Freedom House, Azerbaijan is considered as a “not free” country and the political regime is rated as a consolidated authoritarian regime. The U.S. concern is that the human rights and fundamental democratic freedoms must be guaranteed, elections must be fair and democratic, which will contribute to ending corruption, fraud and violence-based policy in country. Such rapprochement with Russia is intended to maintain Aliyev’s power.

How such developments will affect Azerbaijan itself? There are certain disadvantages and advantages. One of the main disadvantages as mentioned above is economic crisis which is caused by plunging oil prices, as the country is highly dependent on the energy industry. This in turn will cause a wave of redundancies and implementation of some major infrastructure and social project will be stopped. The sharp downturn in oil prices may lead to the loss of thousands of jobs, since most of the abovementioned projects are funded by oil companies. The second

wave of devaluation in Azerbaijan may become unavoidable. A reduction in salaries will worsen a socio-economic condition of the population, which may cause a further political instability in the country.

One of the advantages of the nuclear deal between the U.S. and Iran can be changing attitude towards ethnic Azerbaijanis who live in northern Iran. Another factor is that confrontation between Iran and the international community had a serious concern regarding possible consequences of a military confrontation as the South Caucasus region, particularly Azerbaijan's territory had seen as a base to attack Iran. Reaching a preliminary deal between the parties will contribute to reducing tension in the South Caucasus. Declining the world oil prices will not allow Azerbaijan to strengthen its military capabilities. This, in turn, will lead to reducing the chance of new war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh. Analysis of the recent discourse of Ilham Aliyev, the President Azerbaijan Republic, shows that decline in oil prices influenced the decreased threat of the war towards Armenia. If earlier Ilham Aliyev often mentioned the strong and the powerful army of Azerbaijan, now his discourse mainly focused on the internal situation in the country.

# Chapter 4

## Conclusion

The U.S. policy toward Iran is an integral part of the American foreign policy. Confrontation between Iran and the United States which lasted approximately 35 years did not lead to anything good. One of the main reasons of hostile relations between Iran and the U.S. was the Iranian nuclear program, which was danger to the U.S. national security and international peace. There were occasions when Washington was willing to use military force against the Islamic Republic in order to solve the nuclear problem. However, it was never realized and such developments made the U.S. to impose sanctions against Iran which resulted in Iran's economy getting worse and worse. However, in 2012 six international mediators started talks with Iran in order to solve the Iranian nuclear problem.

As pointed out earlier, the preliminary agreement reached between Iran and the “Big Six” can be considered as a “historic”. Lifting of all sanctions against Iran, warming of tense atmosphere between Tehran and Washington will bring changes in the world politics. The main purpose of the thesis was to (1) identify the consequences of the American-Iranian Nuclear deal to the foreign policy of the United States in Azerbaijan and (2) how these processes would affect Azerbaijan itself. Using content analysis of particular documents and discourse analysis of the speeches of the leaders, the thesis concluded that (1) the consequences of the normalization of relations between the United States and Iran would have two main negative aspects in the future cooperation between the United States and Azerbaijan. First of all, it will mainly affect the U.S.-Azerbaijani relations in terms of economic partnership and geostrategic importance. Secondly,

this process might have a negative impact on the democratization process in Azerbaijan as the country's loosened ties with the U.S. might render Azerbaijan to be more cooperative with an authoritarian Putin's regime. (2) Regarding its impact on Azerbaijan, there are both positive and negative effects. Removal of the sanctions and the return of Iran to the world energy markets would lead to the continuing declining of oil prices, which might cause a financial crisis in Azerbaijan where the economy is entirely dependent on oil. This, in turn, might adversely affect political stability in the country. However, normalization of American-Iranian relations will reduce tensions in South Caucasus, particularly in Azerbaijan, which could have been used as an entry point by the US forces in case of an attack on Iran.

It is unlikely the parties will not reach a final agreement. However, if they do not, the U.S. will have to take other measures against Iran. Iran has complied with all terms of the agreement so far. Both Presidents Barack Obama and Hassan Rouhani will attempt to achieve positive results on June 30, 2015.



# Appendix A<sup>1</sup>:

## **Parameters for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran's Nuclear Program:**

### **Enrichment**

- Iran has agreed to reduce by approximately two-thirds its installed centrifuges. Iran will go from having about 19,000 installed today to 6,104 installed under the deal, with only 5,060 of these enriching uranium for 10 years. All 6,104 centrifuges will be IR-1s, Iran's first-generation centrifuge.
- Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium over 3.67 percent for at least 15 years.
- Iran has agreed to reduce its current stockpile of about 10,000 kg of low-enriched uranium (LEU) to 300 kg of 3.67 percent LEU for 15 years.
- All excess centrifuges and enrichment infrastructure will be placed in IAEA monitored storage and will be used only as replacements for operating centrifuges and equipment.
- Iran has agreed to not build any new facilities for the purpose of enriching uranium for 15 years.
- Iran's breakout timeline – the time that it would take for Iran to acquire enough fissile material for one weapon – is currently assessed to be 2 to 3 months. That timeline will be extended to at least one year, for a duration of at least ten years, under this framework.

### **Iran will convert its facility at Fordow so that it is no longer used to enrich uranium**

- Iran has agreed to not enrich uranium at its Fordow facility for at least 15 years.
- Iran has agreed to convert its Fordow facility so that it is used for peaceful purposes only – into a nuclear, physics, technology, research center.
- Iran has agreed to not conduct research and development associated with uranium enrichment at Fordow for 15 years.
- Iran will not have any fissile material at Fordow for 15 years.
- Almost two-thirds of Fordow's centrifuges and infrastructure will be removed. The remaining centrifuges will not enrich uranium. All centrifuges and related infrastructure will be placed under IAEA monitoring.

### **Iran will only enrich uranium at the Natanz facility, with only 5,060 IR-1 first-generation centrifuges for ten years.**

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A is The Framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's Nuclear Program which was agreed between the "Big Six" and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The document was published in April 2, 2015 as a Media Note on the US Department of State website. Available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/240752.pdf>

- Iran has agreed to only enrich uranium using its first generation (IR-1 models) centrifuges at Natanz for ten years, removing its more advanced centrifuges.
- Iran will remove the 1,000 IR-2M centrifuges currently installed at Natanz and place them in IAEA monitored storage for ten years.
- Iran will not use its IR-2, IR-4, IR-5, IR-6, or IR-8 models to produce enriched uranium for at least ten years. Iran will engage in limited research and development with its advanced centrifuges, according to a schedule and parameters which have been agreed to by the P5+1.
- For ten years, enrichment and enrichment research and development will be limited to ensure a breakout timeline of at least 1 year. Beyond 10 years, Iran will abide by its enrichment and enrichment R&D plan submitted to the IAEA, and pursuant to the JCPOA, under the Additional Protocol resulting in certain limitations on enrichment capacity.

### **Inspections and Transparency**

- The IAEA will have regular access to all of Iran's nuclear facilities, including to Iran's enrichment facility at Natanz and its former enrichment facility at Fordow, and including the use of the most up-to-date, modern monitoring technologies.
- Inspectors will have access to the supply chain that supports Iran's nuclear program. The new transparency and inspections mechanisms will closely monitor materials and/or components to prevent diversion to a secret program.
- Inspectors will have access to uranium mines and continuous surveillance at uranium mills, where Iran produces yellowcake, for 25 years.
- Inspectors will have continuous surveillance of Iran's centrifuge rotors and bellows production and storage facilities for 20 years. Iran's centrifuge manufacturing base will be frozen and under continuous surveillance.
- All centrifuges and enrichment infrastructure removed from Fordow and Natanz will be placed under continuous monitoring by the IAEA.
- A dedicated procurement channel for Iran's nuclear program will be established to monitor and approve, on a case by case basis, the supply, sale, or transfer to Iran of certain nuclear-related and dual use materials and technology – an additional transparency measure.
- Iran has agreed to implement the Additional Protocol of the IAEA, providing the IAEA much greater access and information regarding Iran's nuclear program, including both declared and undeclared facilities.
- Iran will be required to grant access to the IAEA to investigate suspicious sites or allegations of a covert enrichment facility, conversion facility, centrifuge production facility, or yellowcake production facility anywhere in the country.
- Iran has agreed to implement Modified Code 3.1 requiring early notification of construction of new facilities.
- Iran will implement an agreed set of measures to address the IAEA's concerns regarding the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of its program.

### **Reactors and Reprocessing**

- Iran has agreed to redesign and rebuild a heavy water research reactor in Arak, based on a design that is agreed to by the P5+1, which will not produce weapons grade plutonium, and which will support peaceful nuclear research and radioisotope production.
- The original core of the reactor, which would have enabled the production of significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium, will be destroyed or removed from the country.
- Iran will ship all of its spent fuel from the reactor out of the country for the reactor's lifetime.
- Iran has committed indefinitely to not conduct reprocessing or reprocessing research and development on spent nuclear fuel.
- Iran will not accumulate heavy water in excess of the needs of the modified Arak reactor, and will sell any remaining heavy water on the international market for 15 years.
- Iran will not build any additional heavy water reactors for 15 years.

### **Sanctions**

- Iran will receive sanctions relief, if it verifiably abides by its commitments.
- U.S. and E.U. nuclear-related sanctions will be suspended after the IAEA has verified that Iran has taken all of its key nuclear-related steps. If at any time Iran fails to fulfill its commitments, these sanctions will snap back into place.
- The architecture of U.S. nuclear-related sanctions on Iran will be retained for much of the duration of the deal and allow for snap-back of sanctions in the event of significant non-performance.
- All past UN Security Council resolutions on the Iran nuclear issue will be lifted simultaneous with the completion, by Iran, of nuclear-related actions addressing all key concerns (enrichment, Fordow, Arak, PMD, and transparency).
- However, core provisions in the UN Security Council resolutions – those that deal with transfers of sensitive technologies and activities – will be re-established by a new UN Security Council resolution that will endorse the JCPOA and urge its full implementation. It will also create the procurement channel mentioned above, which will serve as a key transparency measure. Important restrictions on conventional arms and ballistic missiles, as well as provisions that allow for related cargo inspections and asset freezes, will also be incorporated by this new resolution.
- A dispute resolution process will be specified, which enables any JCPOA participant, to seek to resolve disagreements about the performance of JCPOA commitments.
- If an issue of significant non-performance cannot be resolved through that process, then all previous UN sanctions could be re-imposed.
- U.S. sanctions on Iran for terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missiles will remain in place under the deal.

### **Phasing**

- For ten years, Iran will limit domestic enrichment capacity and research and development – ensuring a breakout timeline of at least one year. Beyond that, Iran will be bound by its longer-term enrichment and enrichment research and development plan it shared with the P5+1.

- For fifteen years, Iran will limit additional elements of its program. For instance, Iran will not build new enrichment facilities or heavy water reactors and will limit its stockpile of enriched uranium and accept enhanced transparency procedures.
- Important inspections and transparency measures will continue well beyond 15 years. Iran's adherence to the Additional Protocol of the IAEA is permanent, including its significant access and transparency obligations. The robust inspections of Iran's uranium supply chain will last for 25 years.
- Even after the period of the most stringent limitations on Iran's nuclear program, Iran will remain a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which prohibits Iran's development or acquisition of nuclear weapons and requires IAEA safeguards on its nuclear program.

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