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Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

The (De-)Securitisation of the Iranian Nuclear Programme by the Obama and Trump Administrations

verfasst von / submitted by

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Cristina Molinari   Wien / Vienna, 20.06.2021

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Abstract (English)

The US-Iranian relationship has been marked by continuous tensions since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, with the Iranian nuclear programme being one of its major points of contention. While the US supported the programme in the Shah era, the US presidents, amongst them Obama and Trump, perceive it as a military operation for the development of nuclear weapons under the Mullah regime. As such a threat, the programme is described in their discourse to legitimize their foreign policy decisions.

This so-called securitisation of issues is central to the Copenhagen School of thought, whose constructivist understanding of security is based on the speech act, by which an existential threat to the referent object is outlined, that needs to be countered by extraordinary measures. The reversed process, de-securitisation, is also possible, even though it has gained less attention in academia.

The primary goal of the present thesis is to trace both of these processes in the presidential discourse regarding the Iranian nuclear programme. By combining discourse and content analysis the speeches of Presidents Obama and Trump are analysed, tracing the (de-)securitisation, its simultaneous enaction and consequences for policy decisions, focusing especially on the context of the 2015 nuclear deal, which regulated the Iranian nuclear programme.

Keywords: Iran, United States, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, nuclear programme, securitisation, de-securitisation, Copenhagen School

Abstract (Deutsch)

Die US-Beziehungen zum Iran sind seit der Islamischen Revolution 1979 von andauernden Spannungen geprägt, wobei das iranische Atomprogramm diese maßgeblich beeinflusst. Während die USA das Programm zur Schah-Zeit befürworteten, sehen die US-Präsidenten, letzthin Obama und Trump, das vermeintlich friedliche Vorhaben unter dem Mullah-Regime als eine militärische Operation zur Entwicklung von Atomwaffen. Als eine solche Bedrohung skizzieren sie das Atomprogramm in ihrem Diskurs, um damit außenpolitische Maßnahmen zu legitimieren.

Diese so genannte „Versicherheitlichung" von Themen ist zentraler Bestandteil der Kopenhagener Schule, deren konstruktivistisches Sicherheitsverständnis auf dem „Sprechakt" basiert, durch welchen eine existenzielle Bedrohung für das Referenzobjekt beschrieben wird, welche durch außerordentliche Maßnahmen entgegnet werden muss. Auch eine Umkehrung dieses Prozesses, die „Entsicherheitlichung", ist möglich, wenngleich weitaus weniger erforscht.

Diese beiden Prozesse in Bezug auf den präsidentiellen Diskurs des iranischen Atomprogramms zu analysieren, ist das Ziel vorliegender Arbeit. Durch die Kombination von Diskurs- und Inhaltsanalyse werden die Reden der Präsidenten Obama und Trump bezüglich Ver- bzw. Entsicherheitlichung analysiert, um deren Simultaneität und Auswirkungen auf die Realpolitik nachzuzeichnen, insbesondere im Kontext des 2015 vereinbarten Atomdeals zur Regulierung des iranischen Atomprogramms.

Schlagwörter: Iran, USA, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Atomprogramm, Versicherheitlichung, Entsicherheitlichung, Kopenhagener Schule

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Abbreviations

- AEOI - Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran
- AP - Additional Protocol
- AQ - Al Qaida
- BM - Ballistic Missile(s)
- CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis
- CIA - Central Intelligence Agency
- CISADA - Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Disarmament Act
- COPRI - Copenhagen Peace Research Institute
- CS - Copenhagen School
- CSA - Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement
- CW - Chemical Weapons
- EU - European Union
- EU3+3 - France, Germany, the UK, and China, Russia, USA (=P5+1)
- G7 - Group of Seven
- HEU - Highly Enriched Uranium
- HR - High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- HWR - Heavy Water Reactor
- IAEA - International Atomic Energy Agency
- IGO - International Governmental Organisation
- INARA - Iranian Nuclear Agreement Review Act
- INP - Iranian Nuclear Programme
- IR - International Relations
- IRI - Islamic Republic of Iran
- ISS - International Security Studies
- JCPOA - Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
- JPA - Joint Plan of Action
- LEU - Low Enriched Uranium
- LWR - Light Water Reactor
- MAD - Mutual Assured Destruction
- ME - Middle East
- MEK (or MKO) - Mujahideen el-Khalq (People's Mujahideen of Iran)

- MW - Megawatt

- NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

- NNWS - Non-Nuclear Weapons State(s)

- NPT - Non-Proliferation Treaty/ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

- NW - Nuclear Weapons

- NWS - Nuclear Weapons State(s)

- OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

- P4+1 - P5+1 without the USA

- P5+1 - Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and Germany

- QDA - Qualitative Data Analysis

- RO - Referent Object

- R&D - Research and Development

- SWIFT - Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Transactions

- UK - United Kingdom

- UN - United Nations

- UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution

- US/ USA - United States of America

- USSR - Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

- WMD - Weapons of Mass Destruction

- WWII - World War Two/ The Second World War

1. Foreword and Introduction

"Lernen, weiterführende Fragen zu stellen. Den einfachen Antworten misstrauen. Sich selbst auch einmal aus der Vogelperspektive zu betrachten. Sich in die Haut des anderen zu versetzen. Die Welt aus dessen Augen zu sehen. Nicht weil der dann gewonnene Blick notwendigerweise besser oder richtiger wäre. Doch um der Vollständigkeit halber. Wer die eigene Weltanschauung für die einzig richtige hält, allein das eigene Lebensmodell anerkennt, sich anderen überlegen fühlt und daraus möglicherweise noch Privilegien für sich selbst ableitet, der geht den Weg der Konfrontation. Respekt, Verständnis und Augenmaß sind Voraussetzung für ein friedliches Miteinander. Wer einmal anfängt, die dünnen Bretter des Mainstreams zu durchbrechen, trifft schnell auf das Wesentliche. Und oft genug auch auf Mitstreiter."[1]

Michael Lüders

Years ago, when I was still attending school, I had the honour to meet the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner, lawyer, and human rights activist Shirin Ebadi. I attended the public lecture she was holding in my hometown and got a copy of Ebadi's autobiography "My Iran". She signed the book for me. Inspired by this encounter, I chose to tell her story at the final presentation during my high school exams. Shirin Ebadi's life is intertwined with that of her country, Iran. Telling her story means telling Iran's political story of the last decades, the Islamic revolution and changing moderate and conservative Presidents. My interest in politics led to my study choice and my International Relations classes at the University of Innsbruck caught my attention. It was there that I first encountered the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory. We discussed the constructivist approach in the context of George W. Bush's address to the nation in March 2003. Securitising the Hussein regime as posing an existential threat to the US, his speech aimed at legitimizing the subsequent war in Iraq. In studying Bush's remarks, we deconstructed his rhetoric. Looking beyond the surface and critically questioning established worldviews has been a central element in my master classes in Vienna. Studying a wide range of topics from the field of International Politics, Eastern European and African studies, my University professors continuously encouraged critical thinking, asked us to question established terms, concepts and their origins: Who had developed them, and with what interest? Some of my personal readings also shared this approach. Michael Lüders, for example, aimed at deconstructing the "western perceptions" on the Middle East, uncovering perspectives seldomly presented by the media. In sum, these experiences shaped my perception of

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[1] For the English translation, cf. 8.1.

knowledge and augmented my interest in Iranian politics. The US especially had portrayed the country as a terrorist enemy aiming at lethal weapons and thus, coercion as the only policy principle - until Obama's diplomacy track showed a possibly more effective alternative. Questioning my own "Western" point of view on numerous (political) issues, I became interested in the construction of knowledge, its purpose and the role language plays. Therefore, I chose to integrate all these aspects in my master's thesis, combining them in a kind of symbiosis and bringing them further on a path of research and analysis.

1.1   Research Issue, Research Question and State of Research

Since the establishment of the Iranian Republic through the Islamic Revolution in 1979, when the Western-backed Shah fell and an orthodox clergy rose to power in his place, the bilateral relations with the US have been marked by continuous hostilities. Tensions peaked during the hostage-taking at the US-Embassy in Tehran in the course of the uprising. Furthermore, the Iranian nuclear programme is a point of contention, which Iranians claim as the legitimate right of civil use of atomic energy but is perceived by the US as a path towards the development of nuclear weapons and as such a destabilizing factor for the whole region. For decades, the relationship between both countries was shaped by deep mistrust and mutual misunderstanding, hindering any successful diplomatic rapprochement. In the more recent past, a critical point in the bilateral relationship was reached in the aftermath of 9/11 when George W. Bush's rogue state-rhetoric added Iran to the "axis of evil", a blacklist of states seen as terrorist supporters aiming at the development of weapons of mass destruction and therefore not just enemies to the US, but foes of world peace (Hurst 2018, p. 136).

In contrast to his predecessor and despite the ongoing "nuclear crisis"[2], President Barack Obama broke with the traditional US approach through a step-by-step review of foreign policy towards Iran, focusing increasingly on dialogue. This diplomatic engagement resulted in the softening of US-demands[3] and finally the establishment of the JCPOA between the P5+1 countries and Iran - a contested, but unprecedented achievement. The "Nuclear Deal", which was signed in 2015 in Vienna, agreed on

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[2] Due to the revelation of secret nuclear plants in 2002 and failing dialogue thereafter; cf. 2.3.
[3] Such as the concession of Iran's right to enrichment; cf. 2.4.

verification procedures of the Iranian nuclear programme by the IAEA, as well as various limitations regarding uranium enrichment to prevent the development of nuclear weapons (JCPOA 2015). Furthermore, the parties agreed on the easing of US and EU sanctions towards Iran. However, the successful implementation of the treaty was prevented by Donald Trump winning the 2016 US elections, which resulted once again in more restrictive policies regarding Iranian matters. The culmination of this policy shift was the unilateral revocation of the JCPOA years later, accompanied by the re-introduction of sanctions to hinder - in the administration's view - Iran's ascent to the circle of nuclear powers.

But how did the US governments refer to Iran's nuclear programme to introduce these policy changes and the resulting US response? Which rhetoric did Obama and Trump use to illustrate the Iranian nuclear programme as a threat, a matter of national security? How did both presidents portray this in their speech acts in order to legitimize their actions - be it treaties or sanctions?

Existing literature extensively deals with the Iranian nuclear programme and its impact on the US-Iranian bilateral relations (e.g. Hurst 2018), the establishment of the JCPOA (e.g.Gärtner and Akbulut 2017) as well as the foreign policy towards Iran by both the Obama and Trump administrations (e.g. Hurst 2012). Regarding the US discourse on Iranian matters, scholars have applied the concept of securitisation in their work, too, partly focusing on Iran (e.g. Amin 2020), partly on its nuclear policy, e.g. by analysing the administrations of Bush junior and Obama (Rubaduka 2017). While Rubaduka (2017) analysed Bush's and Obama's rhetoric, scholars have not yet described a comparison of the Obama and Trump securitising rhetoric towards the Iranian nuclear programme. However, the current research is more than a continuation of Rubaduka's, as it takes the simultaneous (de-)securitisation of speech acts in the US-Iranian nuclear context into account, which was absent from previous research. Thus, the (de-)securitisation of Obama's and Trump's securitising rhetoric towards the INP is the research problem the present work aims to deal with.

Events such as the killing of the high-ranked Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani by a US drone in early 2020 or Trump's efforts to re-impose sanctions have brought attention to the issue. Most importantly, the recent change of policy under the Biden administration and efforts to renegotiate the Nuclear Deal in Vienna prove the ongoing relevance of the topic.

Concretely, the research question of the present thesis reads as follows: How did the Obama and Trump administrations (de-)securitise the Iranian nuclear programme and how was their rhetoric used to legitimize the US-foreign policy towards Iran?

Furthermore, the present research project aims at answering the following side-questions: To what extent is a process of simultaneous securitisation and de-securitisation observable in the discourse of both administrations? How did the (de-) securitisation influence the establishment and the abolition of the JCPOA?

Regarding the context of the research issue, the aim is to illustrate how the aspirations of the Iranian nuclear policy influenced the bilateral relations of the US and Iran, tracing the origin of the hostile relationship between the two countries, which is still reflected in recent policies and rhetoric. Setting a focus on both the Obama and Trump administrations, a description of the establishment and the main points of the Nuclear Deal of 2015 follows, as well as its aftermath, outlining the degree of compliance of both parties.

Thus, the background information results in the following hypothesis: Both administrations used a rhetoric of simultaneous (de-)securitisation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme. However, Obama focused mostly on de-securitisation while Trump favoured securitisation, as the establishment of and retreating from the JCPOA demonstrates.

Consequently, the present Master's thesis aims at tracing the (de-)securitisation process in the presidents' discourse and at deconstructing their rhetoric. The purpose is, therefore, to explain how the US *constructed* security and threat regarding the matter of a nuclear Iran. In this thesis, threat and security are understood as something intersubjectively created, as stressed by constructivist thought: the US-point of view is just one of many and other actors - especially Iranian ones - would perceive the issue differently. Therefore, it goes beyond the scope of this thesis to claim any "truth", namely assessing the (non)peaceful goals of Iranian nuclear policy or to evaluate its (il)legitimacy. Instead, it aims at tracing how the US perceived these issues and how this consequently influenced its policies.

1.2 The Project's Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The present work starts with a contextualising chapter on the development of the Iranian nuclear programme and its impact on the bilateral US-Iranian relations. This first part of the thesis focuses on the starting nuclear ambitions under the Shah, and their evolution in the post-1979 period under the Mullah regime, especially the nuclear crisis of the early 2000s and recent developments. The US policy during this period is outlined by the dialogue-shaped Obama presidency resulting in the Nuclear Deal and its termination in the Trump era alongside the reintroduction of coercive policies.

For the further elaboration of the research issue, an adequate theoretical framework is required. Therefore, the second part of the thesis explains the thought of the Copenhagen School from the field of International Security Studies. This theory was utilized, as it explains how threats are constructed through speech acts, which is necessary for tracing the presidents' discourses.

Traditional Security Studies were established in the context of the Cold War and after its end more critical approaches unfolded, questioning the hitherto narrow security concept. In "Security: A New Framework for Analysis" (1998), Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde broadened the concept of Security Studies by extending it beyond the traditional state level and the military sector, laying the groundwork for the Copenhagen School. Furthermore, Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde approach security through constructivist lenses according to which security and threat are not something objectively given, but intersubjectively created. As outlined in their securitisation theory, a threat does not exist per se but is merely *presented* as such. Buzan et al. (1998, p. 24) describe securitisation as a process in which "the issue is presented as an existential threat" by an actor providing legitimation "to handle the issue through extraordinary means" to ensure the survival of the referent object, the threatened entity. Finally, the audience must agree to make the securitisation a successful one. Therefore, the speech is not merely a communicative act, but constituting reality (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 24).

Building upon this core work, numerous scholars further developed the theory, amongst those Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard's (2017) concept of simultaneous securitisation and de-securitisation. As already described by CS, every securitised issue can be de-securitised in a reverse process, being what Wæver described as "the

optimal long-range option" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 29) and goal of securitisation. Nevertheless, research on de-securitisation is underdeveloped, as Lene Hansen (2012) argues by emphasising the relevance of the concept. Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard (2017) revolutionized the chronological aspect of securitisation being followed by de-securitisation by assuming the simultaneity of both processes. Thus, the two concepts are not necessarily binary - neither temporarily nor in content. As suggested in the hypothesis, such a development is assumed in the present project.

The third part of the work outlines the methodology, that is utilized for this project. An extensive review of literature is used for grounding the contextualisation and theory, while the empirical analysis provides new findings by analysing speeches of the US-presidents Obama and Trump. Keywords and filters were applied to a search function which selected speeches on the Iranian nuclear programme and retrieved them from the US Government Publishing Office. The relevant speeches are analysed through discourse analysis, the inherent method for tracing securitisation (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25). Behnke et al. (2010, pp. 351–353) describe the discourse analysis as based on a constructive understanding of science and absent of objective truth - just as the Copenhagen School does. Moreover, discourse analysis, especially Critical Discourse Analysis, aims at the deconstruction of texts, terminology and power structures linked to these, understanding language as a process constituting power (Wodak and Meyer 2015, pp. 1–13). This thought applies to the present thesis and its deconstruction of the US-American discourse, shaped by power dynamics: The US does not consent to the possession of atomic weapons to Iran and consequently perceives its programme and a potentially nuclear-armed Iran as a threat to the hegemonic US position. The linguistic component of Critical Discourse Analysis, linked to Critical Linguistics, is crucial as securitisation is identifiable through certain words (e.g. "threatening"). However, the selection of another methodological instrument is necessary, as the discourse analysis is not a methodology itself but uses techniques of content analysis (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 353). Therefore, the material is analysed through a coding process based on Mayring's content analysis whose purpose is to "breaking-up" the text in its units of meaning (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 362). In the present thesis, this proceeds by developing categories deductively from the theory, using its central terms (e.g. "referent object") and developing codes inductively on the material (e.g. "US"). Through this approach, assisted by the analysis software QDA Miner, it is possible to trace the securitisation in the discourse.

The fourth part of the thesis presents the empirical results of the conducted discourse analysis, outlining the presidents' discourse separately and comparatively regarding their (de-) securitisation towards the Iranian nuclear programme and providing an answer to the posed research questions. Finally, in the fifth chapter, the present work and its findings are briefly summarized and concluded with an outlook on the future developments of the issue.

2. An Atomic History: The Iranian Nuclear Programme and US-Relations

The historical background of Iran and US relations is critical to comprehending why the United States perceive the Iranian state and its nuclear programme as a potential threat. Historical events have not merely shaped the relations between the two countries, but are the key to understand their mutual hostility, ongoing tensions, and the assessment of the Iranian nuclear ambitions as a matter of security. Therefore, the present chapter aims at outlining the relationship between the USA and Iran during the second half of the 20th century, during which both countries' alliance transformed into long-lasting animosity. Although, there is no such thing as "absolute objectivity" in constructivist thought, a balanced account of crucial historical events impacting the bilateral relations is relevant for rooting these atrocities. This is achieved by a diverse selection of scholarly articles, reflecting the matter from a view as unbiased as possible. Such an approach enables a critical analysis of the presidential speeches and deconstruction of their rhetoric in the empirical part of the work. Given the predominance of "western" scholars and the possibly resulting bias, scholars who address the issue "without anti-Iranian prejudgments", as Heinz Gärtner (2020, p. 4) puts it[4], were selected.

Among the scholars without anti-Iranian biases, Steven Hurst's monography offers a balanced view of both countries' relations during the past century and how they have been impacted by Iran's nuclear ambitions. As the subtitle "A Critical History" implies, he questions established (Western) narratives and demonstrates engagement efforts and atrocities of both Iran and the US. Both are responsible for the nature of their relationship, a relationship often influenced by domestic politics shaping the decisions of leaders. So, it was not before the "tradition-breaking"[5] President Obama and his reformist Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, that a comprehensive nuclear deal was agreed upon. Nevertheless, both presidents struggled for the recognition of their achievements at home, where US-hawks[6] and Iranian ultra-conservatives rejected any settlement of hostility. Similarly, Reese Erlich, though being a US-American scholar, questions his country's portrayal of Iran and bluntly exposes the American *Realpolitik*

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[4] Introducing the book "Iran in the international system".
[5] Regarding the (post-79) unprecedented policy approach of engagement towards Iran.
[6] Those preferring military actions over peaceful settlement of conflicts.

behind its rhetorical façade: "The U.S. ruling elite can't very well tell the American people that we may go to war with Iran to improve the long-term profits for Exxon Mobil and Halliburton. So, the United States creates threats, or exaggerates those that do exist" (2018, p. 7). This links Erlich's argumentation, albeit unintentionally, to the core of the Copenhagen School of thought: the construction of threat.

Beyond its balanced historical account, the present chapter focuses on the "nuclear aspect" of American Iranian history. This includes the founding and development of the INP as to explain why the Iranian Monarchy sought nuclear power and to illustrate its interweaving with the US, acting as an ally and supplier of nuclear technologies. Despite diverging national interests and emerging disagreements, it is necessary to comprehend the US as a helping hand in early Iranian nuclear developments[7]. Furthermore, the background of the Cold War linked to US proxy interests as well as the policy change in the Islamic revolution's aftermath demonstrates that "the wider US-Iranian relationship has had an enormous impact on the evolution of the nuclear question" (Hurst 2018, p. 3). On the one hand, this is exemplified by the traumatic impact of the "Hostage Crisis" for the US, and on the other, the trauma of foreign meddling into Iranian affairs, such as the CIA-orchestrated coup 1953. The latter, in addition to other post-colonial experiences and actions "confirming" American "untrustworthiness" (such as supporting Saddam Hussein during the Iraq-Iran war) has led to deep mistrust towards the US. Strongly related to this mistrust towards the West is IRI's call for national sovereignty and self-sufficiency: a decisive factor of the nuclear question post-1979.

The JCPOA is, therefore, another core issue of this chapter, given its establishment under President Obama and its withdrawal under his successor Trump, serving as a strong element in their (de-)securitisation discourse. The treaty represents a milestone of the post-Shah US-Iranian relations due to the unprecedented diplomatic engagement leading to its establishment. Therefore, the main points of the JCPOA are highlighted, including crucial details on nuclear know-how. This is of utmost relevance, because it shows the dual use-dilemma[8] of nuclear technology and thus, explains the US' fears of the potential development of NW. Given both presidents' opposing approaches to the deal, it is necessary to provide an overview of both advocates' and

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[7] Amongst other "western" nations such as Germany and France, further discussed at 2.1.
[8] The possibility of being used for both peaceful purposes and warfare, further discussed at 2.1.

critics' accounts - such as Hossein Mousavian on the one hand and Magnus Norell on the other. The former, Mousavian (2018, p. 180) speaks of a "win-win deal" for all involved parties and urges them to adhere to it even in the face of Trump's withdrawal. For him, the JCPOA is the best deal possible, a blueprint for other agreements, and even a "model for a world free from nuclear weapons" (Mousavian 2018, p. 186). In contrast, Norell (2015, p. 288) names the deal a "really bad" one, approved at the cost of US-interests, given Iranian refusal to sign until its expectations were fulfilled and thereby "holding the US and the EU hostage".

Finally, summarizing and drawing conclusions on the chapter's main observations, enduring US perceptions of Iran are described as such: Iran as an aggressor and sponsor of terrorism, Iran as a rogue state pursuing WMD, and Iran as an existential threat. Bock (2020, p. 36) explains such perceptions with "mind-sets", pre-assumptions on an issue functioning as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy and, therefore, being "non-falsifiable: any new information can be interpreted to fit the established mind-sets and images". Given the US' mindset of Iran being the "bad guy", hindering the country to go nuclear is the highest priority. This constructivist approach of constructing "threat" is linking the present chapter to the following, which is dealing with the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory.

2.1   Atoms in a Proliferating World: The Shah's Emerging Dreams

The nuclear programme was launched under the reign of the Shah, the Iranian monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and stands as a symbol of his main policy goals, namely "to modernize Iran and restore Persian glory" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 13). Both ambitions are attributed to his much-quoted hubris, frequently exemplified by the celebration of "the 2,500[th] anniversary of the Persian Empire with a lavish, three-day party on the site of the ancient city of Persepolis"[9], with international royalty and thousands of French wine bottles; an opulent show at the estimated cost of $100 million (Erlich 2018, p. 17). More generally, however, the desire of reinstating Iran's vanished grandeur as a regional power has been the consequence of the country's history,

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[9] Taking place in 1971 it is quoted as the prime example of the Shah's expensive lifestyle, provoking domestic and international outrage, esp. given Iran's socio-economic issues.

namely, the preying on Iranian territory by foreign empires and the circumstances of the Shah's ascent to power itself.

During the 19th century, Iran had been at the mercy of the British and the Russian Empires, who each had their own particular interests and claims to Iranian soil: for the former, it was crucial as a connection to India, whereas the latter was eager to reject British influence on its southern borders. This ongoing rivalry resulted in an "Iranian government incapable of independently running its own affairs" (Hunter 2020, p. 12) and hindered any economic development, creating a quasi-colonial environment.[10] Therefore, Iran, then a monarchy ruled by the Qajar dynasty, sought a way to counterbalance Anglo-Russian intervention efforts, later known as the "Third Power Strategy" (Hunter 2020, p. 12): reproaching the United States. Both countries signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1856, which bears the symbolism of a first engagement, de facto, however, was bare of any significant policies. For instance, the US ignored Iran's request for military protection of merchant ships against the British. At this point, American interests in the region were virtually non-existent, something that would change within a century, when hindering the Soviet influence would become a priority of US foreign policy. This approach is crucial for Iran's "disappointment" with the US: Initially seen as a speaker for the colonized due to its colonial past, the United States swiftly turned out to behave like a colonial power itself. (Hunter 2020, p. 12-13)

Iran's stance did not ameliorate on the verge of the new century. Despite striving towards modernity with a constitutional revolution establishing a parliament, political instability was as persistent as British influence. The latter was mainly due to Iranian oil resources, being amongst the largest worldwide. In the early 20th, century the British had been granted the right for discovering oil fields, resulting in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company becoming one of the world's most powerful. The Qajar Shah had been bribed into conceding the British those exclusive rights and the takeover of oil production was seen as "a shameful 'capitulation' to foreigners" amongst Iranians (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 9). Amid the ending Qajar rule, the British did not directly intervene but demonstrated "tacit support" for the military coup in 1925, whose leader, Reza Khan, became the new Shah, founding the Pahlavi dynasty (Patrikarakos 2012, p.10). Less than two decades later, amid WWII, his rule ended in the face of invasion: Soviet from the North, British from the South. The Shah had not merely failed in strengthening his position

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[10] Iran was continuously exposed to intense foreign meddling, despite never being a colony officially.

and those of an independent Iran, but also came too close to Nazi-Germany for the UK's and USSR's taste (Erlich 2018, pp. 68–69). With troops advancing at Tehran in September 1941, Reza Shah Pahlavi was forced into exile, leaving his son behind and urging him to "take his place" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 7). For the British, Mohammed Reza was only the second choice, having preferred the re-installation of the Qajar Crown Prince, but being forced to give in: "Now a British citizen (…) completely unable to speak a word of Persian, he was considered too much of a stretch even for British Middle East policy. So Mohammad Reza Shah it was" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 7).

Mohammad Reza was the Shah who sought modernization and glory and the one who started the Iranian nuclear programme. Foreign meddling and his "ascend" to power had left deep impressions, which were later reflected in his policies. Patrikarakos (p. 8) describes the Shah's internalization of "two truths at his political birth: the need for his regime to be militarily strong and the ability of the Great Powers, particularly Britain and Russia, to manipulate his country (…), to do whatever they wanted in Iran". In the early years of regency, "the young shah was inexperienced and weak" (Erlich 2018, p. 69) and his position was, de facto, merely symbolic. Secessionist ambitions by Kurdish and Azerbaijani minorities and the continuous loss of power to the parliament were the most obvious symptoms of Mohammad Reza's weakness. The latter was due to Mohammed Mossadegh, a parliamentarian opponent, who became Prime Minister in the early 1950s. As a nationalist reformist, he believed "in western-style democracy, a free press, multi-party politics, and an independent judiciary", but also "strongly opposed British domination of Iran" (Erlich 2018, p. 69). His ultimate goal was the nationalization of Iranian oil, an issue he voted in the Majlis, the parliament, gaining its backing and setting up a pro-forma oil company run by the Iranian state.

Mossadegh's efforts were unacceptable for the British, who imposed a unilateral sea blockade to stop oil exports and pushed the US to conduct regime change. President Truman showed reluctance and favoured compromise, but his successor, President Eisenhower, decided to act amid Cold War concerns, fearing that "growing instability threatened to render Iran vulnerable to Soviet influence" (Hurst 2018, p. 26). In 1953, the CIA and the UK orchestrated a coup d'état, named "Operation Ajax", ousting Mossadegh and installing General Zahedi, who was dismissed two years later by the Shah, making him the sole ruler. Mossadegh had meanwhile become an international

symbol of anti-imperialist defiance and his popularity in Iran is still present. (Erlich 2018, pp. 70–73; Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 11–12)

The coup is one of the most significant examples of what Hunter (2020, p. 14) calls the US' "instrumentalist approach" towards Iran. Reinforcing fears of foreign interference, it became a crucial factor for Iranian anti-Americanism, especially after the Islamic Revolution. For the Shah, however, the successful coup meant increasing power, becoming *the* US-ally in the region and, amongst other strides towards modernization, starting the country's nuclear programme. Due to their waning influence in the region after the Suez Crisis[11], the British were replaced by the US as the dominant foreign power, with its companies receiving half of the country's oil share (Erlich 2018, p. 73). The Shah meanwhile, whose vision was a modern - equated to westernised - Iran with "a more educated population, a more urbanized country and technological advancement" aimed at reaching his goals through "close ties to the west" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 15). What seems like an equally symbiotic relationship de facto disproportionally benefitted the US: Oil supply was ensured, the Shah guaranteed stability functioning as regional "gendarme" and Iran acquired more US arms than any other country (Erlich 2018, p. 17). As Erlich (2018, p. 17) puts it, "U.S. anti-communist diplomacy, military expansion, and business profit all melded together nicely".

The Shah's nuclear ambitions became evident during the 1960s, as he started considering the diversification of energy resources, being aware of the oil's finiteness. Furthermore, Iran's population, and as a consequence, electricity demand, had been growing. Using a new, infinite energy source for this, while exporting the oil, was the more profitable way than "wasting" the precious fuel on domestic purposes (Erlich 2018, p. 18). "A source of cheap power", as nuclear power is, could also "improve a country's economic position and raise its standard of living" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 24), which fitted the Shah's development goals. Modernization meant that Iran could also keep up with the international competition and maintain a certain degree of independence from oil: "The Shah repeatedly outlined, to the point of boredom, the dangers of over reliance on a single energy source for income and of the threat to oil from nuclear power in particular" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 26). Given Iran's history and the Shah's experiences, becoming a modern, western-style state mastering nuclear power was a matter of status, of regional dominance, of Pahlavi strength and of

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[11] About a decade after the Crisis, the British withdraw all their military forces east of Suez.

recognition in the international system, an acceptance that the Shah wanted "more than anything else" (Patrikarakos 2012, p.5).

Nuclear power is not only technologically challenging but also poses the issue of dual-use: the same technology used for a peaceful programme can also be used for military purposes[12]. The fact that "civil and weapons programmes can never be entirely divorced" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 51) makes the genuine intentions of states acquiring nuclear facilities the central concern of non-proliferation efforts. Since having developed the first nuclear weapons, the US has feared the spread of this knowledge, knowing it could not be kept secret from other states. Also, the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US at the close of WWII exemplified the horrific humanitarian and environmental consequences of this weaponry. Thus, calls for the destruction of NW emerged, amongst others, by the United Nations - at the time a newly created organisation to avoid the World Wars' repetition - which advocated to eliminate all main WMDs. (Patrikarakos, 2012, pp. 3–4; Erlich 2018, pp. 23–24)

In 1953, the same year that US-Intelligence services conducted Iranian regime change, President Eisenhower held his "Atoms for Peace" speech at the UN General Assembly. Describing nuclear warfare as "a dread secret" that could inflict "fearful material damage and toll of human lives", he stressed the need to solve the "nuclear dilemma", a dilemma posed especially by the knowledge "possessed by several nations [that] will eventually be shared by others, possibly all others" (IAEA 2020a). To prevent such a scenario, Eisenhower proposed international regulation of nuclear material to guarantee its peaceful use, metaphorically described as the need "to move out of the dark chamber of horrors into the light" (IAEA 2020a). In Eisenhower's vision, the governments "should (…) make joint contributions from their stockpiles of normal uranium and fissionable materials to an international atomic energy agency" (IAEA 2020a), which was established a few years later under that very name - the IAEA. Members should renounce weaponization while promoting "peaceful activities" of nuclear power - these became the two pillars of the Agency, founded in 1957.

By that year, the US had also signed the "Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Civil Uses of Atoms" with Iran (Kibaroglu 2006, p. 213), guaranteeing assistance to its nuclear programme and agreeing on continuous verification through IAEA safeguards

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[12] For a more detailed explanation, cf. pp. 30-31 of the present work.

in return[13] (Hurst 2018, p. 25). Confident of Iran's peaceful intentions, the US did not oppose the Shah's ambitions. On the contrary, they "backed the shah's elaborate plans to make nuclear power an integral part of Iran's electrical grid, in (…) part because he would buy a lot of his nuclear equipment from the United States" (Erlich 2018, p. 18). So they did with the 1957 agreement, providing the country with "a five megawatt (…) light water reactor (…) for research purposes" (Hurst 2018, p. 25). Remaining the only noteworthy atomic facility for about a decade, this LWR, the so-called Tehran Research Reactor, "sat idle in Tehran University", without a "real scientific base capable of operating it" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 16).

Before the Shah solved the issue of lacking scientists and sped up his ambitions towards the 1970s, another look at the international scene and its proliferation issues should be taken. Despite Eisenhower's pledge and the establishment of the IAEA, France and China had joined the circle of nuclear weapon states in the early 1960s. This contributed to the establishment of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, entering into force in 1970 and becoming - together with the IAEA - a milestone of the non-proliferation regime (Hurst 2018, p. 25). Thus far, 191 countries - including Iran - are part of the agreement and it was extended indefinitely in 1995 (UNODA 2020). The agreement follows the "Atoms for Peace" logic, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear power while hindering proliferation and aiming at disarmament.

The NPT thereby differs between nuclear "haves" and "have-nots": By Art. I the former are obliged to neither proliferate any NW nor the knowledge of developing them, while by Art. II non-nuclear-weapon states are committed neither to accept any nuclear warfare from the NWS nor develop such on their own (UNODA 2020). This differentiation has also been the main point of criticism of the agreement, coming from NNWS. For them, the NPT shows a post-colonial bias, allowing a "self-selecting elite" to possess NW while withholding this capacity from the "have-nots", who cannot "be trusted" in this matter (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 30–31). By Art. IX, defining NWS as those having possessed nuclear weapons before 1967, the nuclear powers legitimize their status themselves (UNODA 2020). Therefore, NNWS stress the parties' commitment to Art. VI to negotiate "effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race (…) and to nuclear disarmament (…) under strict and effective international control" (UNODA 2020). Of significant importance is further Art. III,

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[13] Measures to verify the peaceful nature of a nuclear programme, e.g. inspections of nuclear facilities.

verifying the peaceful nature of the countries' nuclear programmes by the obligation to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA and Art. IV, guaranteeing the "inalienable right of all the Parties (…) to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination" (UNODA 2020). The fourth article is frequently quoted by Iran as legitimation for mastering the fuel cycle, a right the US continuously has tried to deny.

Given the international community's efforts to hinder the spread of nuclear weapons, the question comes to the Iranian stance. As mentioned in the introduction, it is not the purpose of this paper to assess whether Iran aims at developing NW. However, this possibility is what the US fears most and is the reason for the nuclear programme becoming a source of tensions in the first place. "Top Democratic and Republican leaders absolutely believe that Iran would like to develop nuclear weapons", observes Erlich (2018, p. 15), while Burr (2009, p. 21) argues that Iran's "unclear intentions" from the beginnings of its programme have "raised serious concerns about nuclear weapons proliferation", especially due to some statements by the Shah. Indeed, a French journalist had quoted him, saying that he aimed at pursuing nuclear weapons; a comment that was, however, denied thereafter (Burr 2009, p. 22).

Becoming a NWS was barely in the Shah's interest, given his conventional military strength, the international norm for prestige and legitimacy shifting from being part of the nuclear club to being part of the NPT, and, most importantly, his willingness to demonstrate Iran's worthiness to be a part of the international community as a modern state, adhering to international treaties (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 54; Hurst 2018, p. 30). Non-adherence would have brought consequences such as "diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions" (Hurst 2018, p. 31) as well as alienation from the US, something that opposed the Shah's ambitions, given that "Washington was a guarantor of the entire Pahlavi project" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 67). US alliance further guaranteed extended deterrence[14] and the lack of an imminent security threat made NW redundant for Iran. However, the Shah kept open the possibility of shifting his position should things change, for example, if a NWS would emerge in the Middle East (Patrikarakos 2012, 65-67)[15]. But even in such a case, the country had to acquire the capabilities to develop such weapons in the first place. Finally, Iran had swiftly ratified the NPT as

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[14] Deter an enemy from nuclear attack towards one's ally (here Iran, being allied with the NWS US).
[15] Patrikarakos' statements are based on an interview with Etemad, head of the AEOI, who recalls a personal conversation with the Shah.

well as the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and "throughout the Shah's reign Tehran complied fully with all its non-proliferation obligations" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 55).

Until the 1970s, the Shah's atomic dreams had not become reality and "Iran barely had a programme worthy of the name" (Hurst 2018, p. 28). It was not until 1967 that the country brought the Tehran Research Reactor into operation, after assigning the task to the young physicist Akbar Etemad, who had gained the urgently needed nuclear expertise during his studies in Europe. For Patrikarakos (2012, p. 20), Etemad's capabilities were one of the three factors affecting the "birth of the nuclear programme", the other two being "Washington's support and the Shah's desperation for nuclear energy". The latter became evident in the early 1970s: President Nixon's new policy[16] reinforced Iran's proxy status and strengthened his regional hegemonic role (Hunter 2020, p. 15). The Shah's ambitions, fuelled by the financial means obtained through the 1973 oil crisis[17], took form in the announcement of establishing the Atomic Energy Agency of Iran a year later - with Etemad as its head and the aim to build 20 nuclear power plants in the next two decades (Kibaroglu 2006, pp. 213–214; Hurst 2018, p. 28). This, in return, was welcomed by an "enthusiastic" Nixon administration, which announced tight cooperation in the matter (Hurst 2018, p.32). In 1974, Iran concluded agreements with French (Framatome) and West German (Kraftwerk Union) companies over the supply of five reactors, uranium, a research centre and two LWRs (Hurst 2018, p. 28). Furthermore, the announcement of founding the AEOI had attracted qualified Iranians from abroad, solving the personnel problem and driving the programme forward (Hurst 2018, p. 21).

Despite the seemingly rapid advancement of the programme, it was about to encounter serious difficulties, such as complicating talks with the US and its eventual halt due to the Islamic Revolution, an event unforeseen by the Shah in the mid-1970s. The increasingly strained relationship with the US started as early as 1974, when India conducted a nuclear explosion, raising grave proliferation concerns and hampering Nixon's initial enthusiasm[18]. If India's allegedly peaceful nuclear programme had led to weaponization, the United States worried the Iranian could take similar actions.

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[16] The "Nixon Doctrine" (1969) provided allies with (military) support while delegating regional security matters to them; Iran was the primary Middle Eastern ally.
[17] An oil embargo decided by the Arab oil exporting countries to revenge US-support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War, resulting in a rise of oil prices and increasing Iran's revenues.
[18] India became a NWS, and never signed the NPT.

(Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 70–71) Furthermore, President Nixon, known to be sympathetic towards the Shah, had to resign at the end of the year and was followed by President Ford, who approved tougher non-proliferation policies, as demanded by Congress. According to Hurst, though, it was less the change in leadership than India's test that "changed everything" (2018, p. 37). Meanwhile, cooperation continued and in 1975, the US and Iran signed an agreement on the purchase of eight reactors (Kibaroglu 2006, p. 214). However, talks were overshadowed by US weaponization worries, being "most concerned about the Shah's interest in a domestic reprocessing facility" (Burr 2009, p. 23), as it could provide the start of a weapons programme.

At this point, an excursion to nuclear physics is necessary to understand the United States' worries: How does the fuel cycle function and which steps involve dual-use capacity? As a first step, uranium ore is mined from the earth. Then, in a chemical process called milling, uranium is extracted, resulting in the so-called "yellowcake" (uranium oxide). The next step involves the conversion of uranium into a form necessary for enrichment. Enrichment involves the increase of uranium 235 isotope, which is needed for a nuclear chain reaction, but only present to 0,71% in natural uranium. This happens by converting yellowcake into uranium hexafluoride (UF_6). For most peaceful purposes, the U_{235} isotope must be increased to 3-5%, which is achieved through elaborating UF_6 with spinning centrifuges and called enrichment. Further, the enriched uranium hexafluoride is converted to uranium dioxide, stored in solid form, in metal tubes, where fission happens. This is the splitting of U_{235} and by the resulting heat and steam, energy is generated; in this case, the fission is "controlled"[19]. After being used a few years, nuclear fuel is either stored in waste installations or re-used for further energy production. The latter is achieved by dividing it into usable material and waste, a chemical process called reprocessing of spent fuel. Thereby plutonium and uranium produce usable fuel for electricity generation again. (IAEA 2020b) Enrichment and reprocessing can, however, also be used for the production of nuclear weapons. The two possibilities are also described as the "uranium-" and the "plutonium way" to the bomb. The former results from U_{235} weapons-grade enrichment, at least 80%, which needs massive centrifuge capabilities, while the "easier" way results from the weapons-grade plutonium created by reprocessing. This rather simplified description of the process is crucial for

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[19] Contrary to the "uncontrolled" fission happening in case of weaponization.

understanding the US-Iranian tensions and main points of the JCPOA at a later point of this work. (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 42–44; Hurst 2018, p. 34)

Iran aimed at mastering the fuel cycle to be independent of foreign countries. The US, meanwhile, was preoccupied, that Iran could take the weaponization path and tried to hinder reprocessing in a national Iranian facility, though the NPT did not forbid this. This was the core issue at the negotiations held between both countries from 1975 onwards. (Hurst 2018, pp. 51–53) For the US, the difficulty was to balance their interests: offer the Shah an acceptable compromise and satisfy domestic proliferation sceptics. Therefore, US officials led by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger tried to find "a position that was not so 'strong' that it would encourage him to buy nuclear technology elsewhere, but not so 'weak' that Congress would reject it" (Burr 2009, p. 23). Such a compromise was the proposal of Iran reprocessing abroad or in a multinational plant. This was, however, unacceptable for Etemad and the Shah, who stated the incompatibility of such a demand with "Iranian sovereignty" (Hurst 2018, p. 41).

Meanwhile, West Germany took a less strict view on proliferating Iran and, resisting US pressure, agreed to deliver reprocessing technologies in 1976 (Hurst 2018, p. 46). As finally, some consensus deemed in US-Iranian talks, newly elected President Carter made efforts unavailing, given his opposition to national Iranian reprocessing. Nevertheless, the Shah insisted on further talks, eventually giving in: The parties agreed on a compromise in 1978, permitting Iran either to store spent fuel either in Iran or in the US while receiving new fuel ("buy-back") or reprocessing in a third country. (Burr 2009, pp. 29–30; Hurst 2018, pp. 48–49) The ratification of this agreement, though, would never take place.

2.2 Ideological Halt and Restart: The Mullah's Atomic Ambitions

1979 was a turning point for Iran itself, the relationship to the US and the country's nuclear programme. Strikes and uprisings that were taking place throughout Iran would become known as the Islamic Revolution, transforming "the country from an autocratic, pro-Western kingdom to an isolationist, Islamic and populist republic" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 92). Despite the Shah's visionary view of a modernized Iran, the great ambitions had not turned successfully into reality. Iranians could afford technical

devices, but functioning electricity was in short supply. Mass industrialization was hampered by inadequate infrastructure. Political freedom was non-existent. (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 84) The Shah had become an "unpopular autocrat" (Hurst 2018, p. 63), leading a corrupt and repressive regime. His secret police and intelligence service had suppressed any oppositional voices with increasing brutality, bringing "disappearance, arrest and torture of political opponents" to the point of escalation (Hurst, 2018, p.64). In 1978, when police shot at demonstrators and martial law was declared, the demonstrations intensified, and the regime's collapse was inevitable. In early 1979, the Shah fled into exile - the US. (Erlich 2018, 17, 75)

Iran once saw the US as the "third way" to counter foreign influence, and the Shah remained an ally beyond his fall. The Iranian people, however, were disappointed by the United States since their involvement in the coup against Mossadegh and their negligence against the Shah's human rights abuses. Now, the protesters demanded the extradition of the monarch for trial, not knowing about his fatal illness and the treatment he was receiving from Washington. (Erlich 2018, p. 75-76) Their belief and concern, fuelled by the US granting exile to other representatives of the old regime, were that America was trying to illegally re-install the Shah (Hurst 2018, p. 66). Therefore, "anti-Americanism was built into the Iranian Revolution" (Hurst 2018, p. 65) and popular anger ignited by the denial of its request, resulted in a march towards the US Embassy in Tehran. Breaking into the building, a group of militant students took over 50 Americans hostage, most of them diplomats. Washington did not intervene militarily, even after a rescue attempt had failed. Instead, the US "cut diplomatic relations" and imposed sanctions (Hunter 2020, p. 18), including the end of "all nuclear assistance to Iran" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 106). Nevertheless, the hostages were kept for 444 days, in what became known as the "Hostage Crisis" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 106).

It was this incident, more than any other aspect of the revolution that changed the US' vision of the country. Initially, they had not feared the revolution, which, despite its name, was not a merely Islamic one, but consisted of various leftist, secular and anti-monarchist groups. Also, the relations with the Shah had not been at their best lately. (Kamel 2018, p. 9) For this reason, hoping for a new US-friendly regime, the country practised "lobbying of the more secular anti-Shah groups" (Kamel 2018, p. 9), though these efforts proved ineffective. The Islamist forces succeeded, especially due to the

leadership capabilities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. "Originally" being what Patrikarakos (2012, p. 90) describes as an "obscure cleric from Qom[20]", he became a known critic of the Shah. Accusing the monarch, inter alia, of being submissive to the West, he was forced into exile, where he started "formulating his theory of Islamic governance and later preaching against the Shah" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 90). Khomeini's ultimate goal, the Shah's fall and his return to Iran became reality in February 1979 when he descended from a plane at Tehran airport - a scene that became historic. He gained the title of "Supreme Leader", the highest office of the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran - a "quasi-dictatorial" system given its "unelected leader" and a "quasi-democratic" due to its elections and constitution (Patrikarakos 2012, p.93). Khomeini backed the hostage-taking seeking "to prolong the crisis, using it to undermine more moderate political opponents and to ensure the dominance of Islamic radicals in the new regime" (Hurst 2018, p. 67).

The humiliation of the hostage crisis and images of protesters burning the American flag while chanting death to the US was imprinted on American collective memory, determining its perception of Iran ever since (Hurst 2018, p. 67). For the American public, the US was "a source of good in the world", while "the new regime [in Iran] was comprised of a bunch of fanatical, irrational thugs" (Hurst 2018, p. 67). The US-leadership went even further, comprehending IRI as "a critical threat to American interests in the Middle East" (Hurst 2018, p. 68) due to its non-alignment policy of "neither East, nor West" (Kibaroglu 2006, p. 215) and its ambitions to support Shiite groups across the region, amongst them the Lebanese Hezbollah, which combats Israel. Also, Khomeini's ideological belief of rejecting Western influence due to its dangers for Muslim society, embedded in the new constitution, did not promote a bilateral relationship (Hurst 2018, p. 66; Patrikarakos 2012, p. 94). Consequently, these developments resulted not merely in President Reagan's naming of Iran as an "outlaw government"[21], but had a long-lasting impact on US-Iranian relations and US perceptions of Iran, namely "an image of the new Iranian regime was forged in the American mind such that relations remain broken to this day" (Hurst 2018, p. 66).

What also broke in the early years of IRI, was the leadership's support for the nuclear programme. "Nothing (…) was more 'Western' than the nuclear programme", notes

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[20] Holy city of Shiism, located south of Tehran.
[21] Amongst other nations such as North Korea or Libya; being a pre-concept to the "rogue state" and an early securitisation act.

Patrikarakos (2012, p. 95), explaining the Mullah's[22] aversion towards the programme as it had hitherto existed. Besides being a symbol of the Shah's unpopular policies, the programme also meant excessive costs and dependence on foreign countries - namely, the West (Hurst 2018, p. 73). To terminate the latter, the regime did not extend the work permits of foreigners, resulting in a flight of scientists and expertise. The increasing lack of professionalism became also evident within the AEOI, now headed by a "totally unqualified" geologist (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 95). The organization's new policy of "scaleback" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 97), displayed the "tendency to destroy everything within it": All running projects were cancelled or halted (Kibaroglu 2006, p. 216). Finally, Iran's international partners terminated cooperation as well. While some compromises were found after legal disputes, cooperation would never reach pre-79-levels and "neither German nor French collaboration produced anything of real substance after the revolution" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 109). Meanwhile, the US had quit any business and abandoned diplomatic relations with Iran since the hostage crisis (Hurst 2018, p. 75), starting a new era of "profound hostility" and a "relationship of pathological mistrust" between both countries (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 62).

However, IRI's rejection of nuclear power was not of a lasting nature. The new regime soon realized that the increasing demand for electricity due to an ever-growing population could not be met without additional supply. Given the necessity to encounter "severe electricity shortages" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 102), the nuclear option was coming back on the table, accompanied by the dilemma of not losing face in the light of such a policy turn (Patrikarakos 2012, p.104). Therefore, IRI stressed its autarkic approach in restarting the nuclear programme, without "the reliance on foreign sources of technology" (Hurst 2018, p. 74) that had been at the core of the Shah's programme. Officially relaunched in 1982, the nuclear programme should become a symbol of Iranian self-sufficiency and working on it a matter of national duty (Hurst 2018, p. 74). This new "nuclear nationalism" aimed at the retrieval of scientists who had left in the wake of the revolution, given their essentiality for the programme's forthcoming (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 112). This position did emerge from IRI's ideology, however, an autonomous programme was also the only possible one, given the increased isolation on the international level, primarily by the US, both directly and indirectly, as even the IAEA terminated assistance to the restarting programme due to US-pressure

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[22] The title of an Islamic cleric.

(Patrikarakos 2012, p. 107). In 1982, President Reagan had started a new policy, that, additionally to the halted cooperation on nuclear matters, "evolved into a complete bar on the sale or transfer of US-produced nuclear materials to Iran" (Hurst 2018, p. 75). For Iranian scholars, such as Mousavian (2012) and Fakheri (2017), such policies of withdrawal were a crucial reason for Iran's will to accelerate its autarkic nuclear programme, thus having a counter-productive effect on proliferation and preluding what would become the "Nuclear Crisis" in the early 2000s.

The actual continuation of the nuclear issue met numerous obstacles, the most grievous being the Iraq-Iran war, which ironically also was a catalyst for Iran's ambitions. Saddam Hussein, being a Sunni leader of a majoritarian Shia population, feared the Iranian revolution as a blueprint for Iraq and attacked Iran in 1980, starting an eight-year-long war ending with a ceasefire and no actual winner, proving to be devastating for both sides. This military conflict strengthened Iran's isolated position and further deteriorated any chance of rapprochement with the US. (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 103; Kibaroglu 2006, p. 216) Given multiple Iraqi attacks on the Bushehr reactor, Iran started blaming the allegedly biased IAEA and the international community for siding with Hussein against Iran (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 110). Washington's behaviour further reinforced IRI's vision, as the Reagan administration eventually sided with Iraq, fearing an Iranian victory could result in a ME "overrun by anti-Western fanatics" (Hurst 2018, p. 71). Supplying Hussein with intelligence and encouraging its allies to arms sales, the US was also directly involved in combat at the end of the war[23] and in shooting down a civil Iranian airliner[24] (Erlich 2018, p. 81). Furthermore, the United States did not condemn the Iraqi regime at any point, neither for its aggression in starting the conflict nor for its repeated use of chemical weapons against Iranians, which violated international law (Hurst 2018, pp. 71-72). These actions exemplified American unwillingness to accept the Islamic Revolution and the new regime, paired with the United States' perception of both as a "mortal threat to American interests" (Hurst 2018, p. 85).

Regarding Iran, Kibaroglu (2006, p. 216) argues that the experiences of the war were an important factor for the leadership's change of mind in nuclear matters, as it had understood the importance of modern technology - or even weaponry. Officially, any

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[23] In the so-called "Tanker war", initiated by Iraq attacking oil tankers in the Gulf; the US got involved in the attack of Iranian tankers.
[24] If unintentionally or not, remains disputed.

nuclear weapons ambitions of the IRI were non-existent: In the early 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini had issued a fatwa[25] labelling the weaponry as "un-Islamic" and "haram"[26] (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 117; Hurst 2018, p. 79). Patrikarakos (p. 118) further describes the motif (besides the country's obligation by the NPT it had not withdrawn) of opposing nuclear weapons with a third world-point of view: This weaponry was one of the imperial powers, of powers antithetical to the Iranian one and was therefore rejected. While concrete evidence is lacking, scholars argue that after the war with Iraq and its use of CW, Iran had "reason enough" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 80) to aim for nuclear weaponry, which eventually was even voiced by Iranian politicians[27]. For certain, the country aimed at mastering the nuclear fuel cycle, as it had done under the Shah, and for certain this ignited Western - primarily US - fears over the development of a weapons programme.

But, besides its ambitions, how far had the Iranian programme come yet? Under the Shah, the first step of mining was achieved and now Iran was working on the second step in mastering the nuclear fuel cycle, the conversion of uranium into a form suitable for enrichment, while enrichment itself was still unachievable due to lacking technology. Given the scientific and equipment blockade of the West, Iran searched for nuclear suppliers among the modernizing countries, such as Argentina, China, and the USSR, starting talks and agreeing on the provision of fuel, equipment, training, and the construction of new reactors. An important starting point for mastering the fuel cycle was further a clandestine Pakistani source: the A.Q. Khan network[28]. Being the largest black market for "illicit nuclear materials the world has ever seen" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 122), it provided Iran with know-how on a gas centrifuge programme and with P-1 centrifuges[29], going unnoticed by the international community. This enabled IRI to start a research and development programme on enrichment by the late 1980s. (Hurst 2018, pp. 77–78; Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 121–125)

Altogether, Iran made no substantial nuclear progress in the first decade after the revolution. Though things were about to change after the war: Rafsanjani, who became president at the end of the 1980s, had a personal commitment to the nuclear issue and

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[25] A legal statement by an Islamic cleric.
[26] Arab for "forbidden", often used in a religious context.
[27] Rafsanjani, later Iranian president, called for a WMD-programme after the war.
[28] Abdul Qadir Khan, "father" of the Pakistani nuclear bomb by illegally sharing know-how from a Dutch firm, later proliferating e.g. North Korea and Libya through his smuggling network.
[29] Used in the Pakistani programme (therefore "P"), re-named as IR1 in Iran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the new "Supreme Leader" following Khomeini's death, was also a proponent of the programme. Still facing a West unwilling to share any nuclear technology with Tehran, China became its major supplier, providing extensive amounts of equipment and taking a decisive part in the construction of the Isfahan research facility. (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 132–136) However, in 1997, Chinese assistance to Iran became "too much for Washington" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 136). Successfully coercing China, the country refrained from new cooperation with Iran, carrying on with running projects only. This resulted in Russia becoming Tehran's primary supplier, assisting in the finalisation of the Bushehr reactor, after the German Kraftwerk had refused to do so on political grounds. Given the dissolution of the USSR, the crumbling Russian economy needed cash and the chaotic Yeltsin presidency lacked control over the energy ministry, which handled the export of nuclear material, apparently "willing to sell Iran anything it wanted" (Hurst 2018, p. 136). Politically, Russia proved defiant towards US coercion and therefore started performing the role of Iran's "ally", defending its programme. A position that was reinforced when Vladimir Putin became president, whose defiance towards US demands went thus far to increase technical support to Iran in the face of US sanctions (Hurst 2018, p. 111). Finally, the change of leadership at the AEOI, commanded by Khamenei himself, led to an ultimate spur in the Iranian programme: Amrollahi, reluctant in taking further steps to not provoke further tensions with the West, was replaced by Aghazadeh, neglecting such considerations (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 163–164).

US-American fears of the potential military nature of Iran's nuclear programme were increasingly palpable by rhetoric and legislation throughout the 1990s. President George H. W. Bush expressed concerns in this regard on Chinese and Russian deals, signing non-proliferation acts in the early 1990s, "banning foreign military sales" (Hurst 2018, p. 96). His successor Bill Clinton, too, announced unilateral sanctions[30], banning "all US trade with Iran" (Hurst 2018, p. 102) while rhetorically his administration included Iran to the "backlash states", a manifestation of the emerging rogue state-concept and increasing securitisation (Hunter 2020, p. 21). While Iran's nuclear ambitions ignited fears on the production of WMD, its involvement in assassinations and bombings abroad[31] gave it the label of a terrorism sponsor and its anti-Israeli

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[30] Amongst others, the Iran-Libya-Sanctions-Act in 1996; however, US sanctions were not supported by any other country and therefore lacked effectiveness.
[31] Such as the murder of Kurdish dissidents (Berlin) and attacks at the Israeli Embassy (Buenos Aires)

stance was unacceptable for the US, making Iran what Hunter (2020, p. 20) calls the "ideal new global enemy" in a post-Soviet world. Thus, the framing of the debate took place "within a political not a technical context" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 155), with the IAEA giving Iran "a clean bill of health" throughout the 1990s being of minor impact (Hurst 2018, p. 107). A clash of rhetoric started: Those of a "murderous, irrational Iran versus the perfidious and imperialist West", and Washington tried "everything to stop Iran getting nuclear technology while Iran tried everything to get around this" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 150). The clash was also the result of missed opportunities of dialogue posed by moderate leaders. Both Rafsanjani and his successor Khatami, the most reformist president since the revolution, displayed the willingness to engage with the West, with the latter even calling for a "dialogue among civilizations" (Hunter 2020, p. 22). Washington made some rhetorical concessions, but domestic pressure from both countries' hardliners hindered any genuine rapprochement and "years of repeated overtures and offers of talks thus came to nothing" (Hurst 2018, p. 117). The 1990s' stalemate represents "something of a lost decade" (Hurst 2018, p. 124), preluding the overt confrontation of the incoming century.

2.3   Mutual Mistrust and Delusive Dialogue: The Nuclear Crisis

In August 2002, the US administration saw its worst fears materializing. An Iranian oppositional group, the "People's Mujahideen of Iran"[32], revealed the existence of hitherto secret nuclear facilities: advanced uranium enrichment at a site in Natanz, and a heavy water reactor in Arak (Kamel 2018, pp. 13–14). Despite their existing worries of clandestine - possibly military - activity by the Iranian, the detailed information on both plants, coming up in the MEK press conference, was "shocking the United States" and the international community (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 171). The "shock" consisted primarily in the fact that Iran had managed to hide these developments from the world, most importantly, from the IAEA: while Tehran did not break the NPT itself, it violated the safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency by not declaring the sites. Furthermore, the infrastructure raised concerns about possible weaponization given its dual-use nature, and especially due

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[32] Mujahideen el- Khalq (MEK or MKO), a militant anti-Shah and later anti-IRI group.

to traces of HEU[33], found later in Natanz. (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 171; Hurst 2018, p. 138)

The MEK's revelations brought into light how far Iran had come with its ambition to independently master the fuel cycle during the 1990s: Despite China's compliance with US pressure, it had provided Iran with sufficient know-how to construct a uranium conversion facility and the A.Q. Khan network - which was only exposed in 2002 - had delivered the design for P2-centrifuges given the malfunctioning of the P1-type. However, Iran allegedly lacked scientific capabilities for bringing them into operation, despite some research at the Tehran reactor. Nevertheless, enrichment and resulting production of fuel had become the main objectives of the nuclear programme, accompanied by the construction of the Natanz facility and of a 40 MW reactor in Arak, which would produce plutonium. Without having a functioning power plant yet, these goals rendered the peaceful nature of the programme highly questionable. (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 158–169) This was the reason for the international uproar, as this was a development that could not be reversed. This was the start of a new era: "the nuclear crisis had begun" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 176).

At this point, a look at the year preceding the crisis is necessary. The events of 9/11 do not need recounting. Interestingly, it were these incidents that brought the US and Iran together in a brief moment of alliance: Iranian people showed public compassion with the US victims and President Khatami condemned the attacks, offering help to the US' coalition in the Afghanistan War. This was due to the perpetrators of 9/11 being members of the extremist Sunni group Al Qaida and therefore, opponents of the Shia regime in Tehran. Furthermore, Khatami, who believed in diplomacy, saw this as a chance to engage with the US. Despite some Iranian assistance in combatting AQ in Afghanistan, both countries' shared interests were of short duration and abruptly ended by a securitisation speech *par excellence*. (Hurst 2018, p. 135; Hunter 2020, p. 23; Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 170–171) In early 2002, President George W. Bush addressed the nation at the State of the Union, warning about the threat of terrorism and rogue states promoting it - and included Iran to those: "States like these[34], and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world" (Bush 2002). Further accusing Iran of "aggressively" pursuing WMD and "exporting" terror, it was

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[33] Uranium is highly enriched above 20%, above 90% it is weapons-grade.
[34] Iran, North Korea, and Iraq

declared to be a danger worth fighting in this new American war: "Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun" (Bush 2002). Including Iran to the "axis of evil" and framing its threat undermined Khatami's domestically controversial moderate position as well as any further rapprochement (Kamel 2018, p. 12).

The Bush administration took a hard line after what had come out on Iran's nuclear progress and favoured referral to the UNSC from the beginning, while the EU was more reluctant and pledged to postpone this option, fearing it would result in an entirely non-compliant Iran. The IAEA, meanwhile, had requested access to Iranian sites for verification purposes, which the country allowed only six months later. (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 177–185; Hurst 2018, pp. 138–139) After this, the Board of Governors confirmed the break of the CSA, issuing a resolution for the suspension of all Iranian enrichment as well as the implementation of the Additional Protocol[35]. A few months later, Khamenei issued a fatwa on the prohibition of WMD. (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 171) Nevertheless, Iranian hardliners called for a withdrawal from the NPT and the IAEA; a position that was lost, however, against those advocating talks. This resulted in the establishment of a committee on nuclear negotiations, led by Hassan Rouhani, the later president[36].

The Iranian decision to negotiate was influenced by the US invasion of Iraq and resulting fears of a military confrontation[37]. On the other side, the so-called EU3 - Germany, the UK and France - were eager to find a diplomatic solution, much to the US' displeasure. (Hurst 2018, pp. 141–142) The United States was not willing to negotiate, as the rejection of Iranian efforts prove - the so-called "grand bargain" offers (Hurst 2018, p. 139). Despite not participating in direct talks, the US insisted on a complete suspension of Iranian enrichment, the "so-called 'zero centrifuge' formula" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 194) which should "ensure that Iran's civil enrichment programme could not be diverted into becoming a nuclear weapons program" (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 172). The zero-enrichment option was rejected by Iran, and several meetings with the EU3 were unsuccessful, given both sides' unwillingness to cede. In October 2003, finally, a compromise was agreed: Tehran was "voluntarily" willing to halt enrichment "temporary" (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018,

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[35] Containing further verification measures for the IAEA to assess a nuclear program's peaceful nature.
[36] Elected both in 2013 and 2017, he is leaving office in 2021.
[37] The US-war in Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein (a regime change that Bush also wished for Iran).

p. 171), allow IAEA inspections and sign the AP, while the EU3 recognized Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear programme and guaranteed non-referral to the UNSC. The "Tehran Declaration" was, therefore, a diplomatic success. (Hurst 2018, p. 142)

The agreement's achievement was, however, not a definite solution. Iran wanted to continue enrichment and was hoping for further talks, while the Europeans had no urgency to do so, given the US' unchanged position. Meanwhile, the Iranian nuclear programme did not stop; work at Arak continued, as it did in Isfahan, where the second step of the fuel cycle, the conversion into UF_6, was completed. The Bush administration did continuously press on the referral-option and Tehran tried to avoid this by continuing negotiations with the EU3, which led to an additional agreement in 2004. The so-called "Paris agreement" was somewhat of a repetition: Iran agreed on the peaceful nature of its programme, committing to IAEA safeguards and further enrichment suspension until the latter was satisfied by evidence of the former. The Europeans, instead, would recognize and assist the programme. The core issue, Iran's claim to enrichment and the fuel cycle remained fundamentally unresolved. (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 172; Hurst 2018, p. 154)

By 2005, the US, in a mixture of recognizing its power limits, the inability to lead another war (despite its persisting desire for regime change) and some moderate voices in the second Bush administration recognizing the lacking success of the hitherto approach towards Iran resulted in a policy change, was considering talks. However, as Patrikarakos (2012, p. 213) puts it: "The singular tragedy of 30 years of Iranian-US relations is timing". The engagement had not brought incentives for Iran, and with domestic pressure- from hardliners and Khamenei himself, Khatami had to give in his efforts: Enrichment was resumed. (Hurst 2018, pp. 155–158) Furthermore, 2005 was an election year, and the Iranians, deluded by two reformist presidencies - Rafsanjani and Khatami - without any amelioration of Iran's stance chose Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative with the main policy goal of reducing foreign influence and dependence (Kamel 2018, p. 16).

The nuclear crisis was now approaching its climax, with the breach of agreements and shutdown of negotiations. Ahmadinejad's position towards the West and his rhetoric, which questioned both 9/11 and the Holocaust, led to waning hopes amongst those willing to engage. Due to a quickly advancing programme, including the resumption of R&D at Natanz, the suspension of the AP by the Majlis and the heightened fear of Iran

choosing the weapon path, the IAEA Board referred Iran to the UNSC in early 2006. With the situation on the brink of escalation, Russia initiated a new round of multilateral talks, after Iran had declined a bilateral offer of joint enrichment. For the first time, the US sat at the table, and so did China, which meant a bolstering for the hitherto unsuccessful EU3. The talks by the so-called P5+1, however, were confronted with Iranian rejection, even towards the historical US-offer of face-to-face talks. Thus, the diplomatic options were running out while Iran had achieved 3,5% enrichment[38] and was continuously augmenting the number of its centrifuges. (Hurst 2018, pp. 163–164; Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 226–231) This was the starting point of extensive sanctions towards Iran throughout the forthcoming years, implemented by the UNSC through several resolutions: In 2006, UNSCR 1696 announced the introduction of sanctions in case of Iranian non-compliance in suspending enrichment activities, including R&D; the same year resolution 1737 imposed sanctions given Iran's defiance, banning import and export of nuclear material and freezing assets of persons involved in proliferation. In 2007, UNSCR 1747 banned arms exports and issued travel bans for involved persons, followed by UNSCR 1803 in 2008, extending sanctions and banning dual-use technology, while, finally, resolution 1835 merely called for compliance and the continuation of the issued sanctions, given China's and Russia's unwillingness to back more sanctions. (IAEA 2020c)

Additionally to the UNSCR, the US imposed unilateral sanctions[39] versus Tehran, after it rejected the P5+1's "freeze for freeze" offer - a freeze of enrichment for a freeze of new sanctions. Therefore, the dialogue broke down entirely by 2008. (Hurst 2018, pp. 173–174) However, the coercive approach towards Iran did not stop its programme- on the contrary. By 2007, Iran announced reaching 3,7% enrichment and 3,000 working centrifuges, and furthermore, the sites at Bushehr and Arak had been completed (Patrikarakos 2012, pp. 233–242) and the country was, thus "closer to a nuclear weapon at the end of the Bush Administration than at the beginning" (p. 244). Hurst (2018, p. 175-176) explains the failure of engagement mainly by the United States' unwillingness to concede Iran "at least some degree of enrichment on its own soil", the lack of incentives and the threat of regime change, that the Bush administration had never completely wiped off the table.

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[38] This percentage is crucial, as from this point on, enrichment can easily proceed until weapons-grade.
[39] Further targeting Iranian business, involved in the nuclear programme, financially.

2.4 President Obama: New Dawn for Diplomacy?

The US election of 2008 brought Barack Hussein Obama into office, who wrote history not merely for being the country's first black president but also for his unprecedented US-Iranian engagement, culminating in the most comprehensive post-79 nuclear agreement. However, before the JCPOA could break what Mousavian and Toossi (2017, p. 66) call a decade-long "vicious circle of U.S.-Iran escalation", President Obama reinforced containment and sanctions during his first term in office. This approach of continued pressure while keeping the diplomatic option on the table as well, is frequently described as a "dual-track" policy (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p. 72). Therefore, compared to earlier administrations, Obama's initial approach was primarily a "change in tone, not policy" (Hunter 2020, p. 24).

His change in tone became evident in Obama's Nowruz[40] address in 2009, raising hopes for bilateral engagement. For the first time since 1979, an American president directly addressed the "leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran", thus acknowledging the country's right to a "place in the community of nations" (The White House 3/20/2009). Further, Obama stressed the need to overcome the "serious differences that have grown over time" and his willingness to engage with Iran:

> "My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us, and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect." (The White House 3/20/2009)

While the US had finally approached the diplomatic path, Iran faced presidential elections in 2009, with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad running for a second term. In contrast to Ahmadinejad's stance, his reformist competitors did not oppose dialogue with the US, notwithstanding their commitment to the programme itself. Eventually, Ahmadinejad won the election amid calls of fraud, followed by the largest protests since the Islamic revolution, directed against the conservative regime and its political-

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[40] The Iranian New Year (March 2009)

economic failure. Hopes for reconciliatory steps between the US and Iran, which might have taken place in case of a reformist victory, were ultimately dashed with the successful repression of the demonstrators. (Hurst 2018, pp. 196–197)

Besides continuation of ultra-conservativism amongst Iranian leadership, Obama's diplomatic ambitions encountered domestic opposition as well, especially from the Republicans and from allied Israel, who had long perceived Iran as an existential threat, due to its nuclear programme, pushing George W. Bush to speak of the imminent danger of a "nuclear holocaust" (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 180) in the case of an Iranian attack. Furthermore, both groups would oppose the Nuclear Deal and especially the latter would constantly influence Obama's interest balancing, not at least because he wanted to prevent an Israeli military attack on Iran. This led him to contrast his diplomatic ambitions with harsh rhetoric; his speech at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's Annual Policy Conference being an example thereof. Held in 2008, before his election to the President of the United States, his rhetoric was much more like the "traditional American" rhetoric of the previous decades, securitising Iran as the greatest "threat to Israel" and "to the peace and stability of the region", supporting "violent extremists" and challenging US interests (The New York Times 2008). Central to this threat is its "illicit nuclear program" and Obama pledges that his "goal will be to eliminate this threat", primarily by preventing "Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon" (The New York Times 2008). He also proposes measures to achieve this aim, such as the expansion of financial sanctions to isolate and pressure the Iranian regime - measures he would eventually impose during his first term in office.

Therefore, the primary aim of the present section is to provide the policy background for the speeches analysed in the empirical part to contextualise the presidential rhetoric and conclude how the latter legitimized the former. So, the chapter is divided by Obama's terms in office: First, his "dual-track" approach to Iran and its nuclear programme, (failed) talks and sanctions are outlined as well as a brief questioning of these policies' effectiveness, linked to the nuclear programme's development. Second, the process that led to the JCPOA, and the main points of the treaty are described as well as the opposition towards it, which is linking it to the subsequent chapter on the Trump presidency. The observations contained in this chapter, as the above-mentioned speeches already suggest, lead to the hypothesis, that Obama both securitised and de-securitised the Iranian programme.

2.4.1 Tightened Grip, Softened Rhetoric: The "Dual-Track"

The first years of Obama-presidency were marked by the cycle of failed negotiations of the previous years: defiance, further development of the nuclear programme, imposed sanctions and renewed attempts of diplomacy. The fact that Obama's engaging rhetoric was not linked to such a policy outcome became evident as early as 2009. Besides his Nowruz address, no noteworthy engagement had taken place until the Geneva talks in October. Furthermore, these were overshadowed by the revelation of a further secret Iranian nuclear plant in the previous month: a second enrichment facility had been constructed at Fordow, near Qom, besides the known one at Natanz. Despite placing Obama under pressure domestically, this did not alter his negotiation plans for Geneva, where the US proposed a "swap deal": Iran would ship a certain amount of its LEU stockpile abroad, in return for fuel to be used for research and medical purposes at the Tehran Research Reactor. To discuss this proposal, Saeed Jalili, the Iranian nuclear chief negotiator met US-Undersecretary of State, William Burns, for the highest-level-dialogue between both countries since the Islamic Revolution. During the talks in Geneva, the so-called "swap deal" was further elaborated, agreeing on details such as the amount of 1,200kg of LEU that had to be shipped to Russia, where it would be enriched up to 20% and transported to France for fuel production. From there, it would be transferred back to Iran in the form of fuel pads, thus circumventing enrichment on Iranian soil. Additionally, Iran had to provide access to the nuclear site at Fordow for IAEA inspections. (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p. 68; Hurst 2018, pp. 198–199)

While both parties approved the proposal in Geneva, its implementation ultimately failed. This was mainly due to domestic Iranian opposition, where the deal was met with "profound distrust" (Hurst 2018, p. 200) towards the West, fearing that Iran might not get the fuel once it had shipped the LEU out of the country. Therefore, Iran insisted on receiving the fuel before the shipping, which, however, was not an option for the US. The American compromise to alter the third country of enrichment, possibly Turkey, was, on the other hand, not sufficient for Tehran, and when the US administration started calling for a halt of enrichment activities, the Iranians finally

retreated. This meant a renewed breakdown of engagement, accompanied by a further spur of Iran's nuclear capabilities: it reached 20% of enrichment in February, thus being able to supply the Tehran Research Reactor autonomously and successfully mastering the fuel cycle. While other countries such as Brazil and Turkey started new talks on a swap proposal[41], the US initiated sanctions, introducing a maximum pressure phase for the following two years. (Hurst 2018, p. 201; Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p. 69-71)

In June 2010, the United Nations Security Council passed the hitherto harshest Resolution, based on a P5+1 draft. The UNSCR 1929 was comprised of an extended arms embargo, including also ballistic missiles technology, blocked any financial services to Iranian enterprises that could be involved in the nuclear programme and expanded the blacklist of individuals, freezing their assets (IAEA 2020c). Additionally, the US and EU imposed unilateral sanctions. The most comprehensive sanctions were issued by the US-American CISADA, introducing secondary sanctions, that, for instance, targeted firms investing more than a certain amount in Iran or providing dual-use technology, as well as banks trading with Iran. The country was mainly banned from accessing US markets or trade. Besides this "open" containment, the US also used covert actions against the nuclear programme, in what became the "first weaponization of a computer virus by one country against another" (Erlich 2018, p. 37). The so-called Stuxnet virus targeted Iranian enrichment facilities, and as a result "centrifuges at Natanz mysteriously started to self-destruct" (Hurst 2018, p. 206). By affecting the speed of the centrifuges, the virus disintegrated the machines, thus obstructing the enrichment process. Further, while "the Obama administration confined itself to non-lethal forms of covert action, (…) its Israeli ally did not feel so constrained" (Hurst 2018, p. 207): Several Iranians involved in the nuclear programme were killed between 2010-12; the murders were linked to Israeli intelligence services (Erlich 2018, pp. 37–38).

Meanwhile, diplomatic engagement was de facto non-existent, given the fruitlessness of all further negotiation attempts in Geneva and Istanbul (Hurst 2018, p. 208). Given the US sanctions, Iran was more unwilling than ever to concede its right to enrichment while constantly increasing its LEU stockpile and finally adding Bushehr to the

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[41] Leading to the so-called Tehran Accord between the three countries in 2010, resembling the Geneva swap deal but involving shipping to Turkey, no enrichment halt, and an unchanged amount of shipped LEU, despite its stockpile had augmented in the meantime.

electricity grid in 2011 (Patrikarakos 2012, p. 270). Therefore, Mousavian and Toossi (2017, p. 74) assess that: "Contrary to claims of the efficacy of sanctions on Iran, they failed to achieve their stated goals". Mousavian (2012, p.12) goes even further, assessing that coercion had not only failed but had been counter-productive: "The irony is that the progress of Iran's nuclear programme is the product of Western efforts to pressure and isolate Iran while refusing to recognize Iran's rights". But why was the US nevertheless pursuing this strategy? First, the most significant reason was the lack of alternatives and Obama's willingness to avoid a military option at any cost. Amongst its disastrous consequences would be spiralling violence in the region after an attack, including possible retaliation by Iranian allies against Israel and the endangering of the world's oil supply[42]. Furthermore, limited popular support at home for such an option and especially the fact that it would not eliminate the nuclear programme and to an even lesser extent, the Iranian will to pursue it, de facto ruled out this option. Despite remaining officially on the table, the cost, amongst it the side-effect of increased legitimacy and support for a nuclear Iran, was not worth the mere delaying of Iranian nuclear capabilities an attack would provoke. Second, as Hurst outlines in his paper, sanctions are rarely effective and their effectiveness is determined by certain factors, such as their cost compared to the one of compliance. In the Iranian case, the cost of compliance was extremely high - it would mean a halt to enrichment - and defiance was, therefore, the preferable option to Iran. (Hurst 2018, pp. 549–553)

While the Iranian commitment to its nuclear programme had not changed through the sanctions, it had nevertheless heavily impacted the Iranian economy. In 2012, in the aftermath of further fruitless talks in Istanbul, Baghdad and Moscow due to both sides' inability to reach a compromise, the US and the EU decided on new rounds of sanctions. Through several executive orders, the Obama administration further extended blacklists, targeting entities not involved in the nuclear programme. This included Iranian banks and expanded secondary sanctions aimed at all entities conducting business with Iran. Moreover, Iran was disconnected from the SWIFT system, making transactions from and to the country virtually impossible, cutting its financial system off from the rest of the world. Finally, the EU issued an embargo on Iranian oil and gas, alongside further asset freezing. These sanctions impacted the Iranian economy at an unprecedented level, causing the currency to crash, bringing

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[42]In case of war, Iran could block the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, through which almost half of the world's oil supply is shipped.

about a recession, rising inflation and unemployment. Iran had to establish what Erlich (2018, p. 38) calls a "resistance economy", producing goods that were not importable and relying on the Chinese and the Russian governments to circumvent the sanctions, that after all, had not been ratified by the UNSC but were "merely" unilateral. Thus, as any negotiations stalled and Iran was still unwilling to compromise on its nuclear programme in the face of such harsh sanctions, hopes for diplomatic engagement were minimal and the military option seemed to become more probable. (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, pp. 73–74; Hurst 2018, p. 202; Patrikarakos 2012, p. 272)

Despite fears of an escalating conflict, the bilateral relations were moving towards the diplomatic path again in early 2013. This was due to President Obama's re-election in 2012 and his pursuit of the bilateral "backchannel" option, which led to secret talks with Iran in Oman. These meetings are described as a "turning point in the nuclear crisis" by Mousavian and Toossi (2017, p. 75), being "out of the public eye and without the worry of political backlash" and therefore, functioned as door-opener to formal P5+1 meetings. Obama's turn towards diplomacy was rooted in the ineffectiveness of the sanctions and the threat of an Israeli military attack, which had to be prevented. Furthermore, the replacement of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by John Kerry was a decisive step towards engagement. While Clinton had taken a harsh position on Iran, being "an ardent supporter of Israel" (Hunter 2020, p. 25) and advocating tough sanctions, Kerry was known for a more compromising stance: he had criticized the United States' denial of enrichment to Iran given its adherence to the NPT. According to Hurst (2018, p. 214), Kerry's appointment proved Obama's preparedness to move "toward acceptance of Iran's right to enrich". An acceptance that laid a solid basis for the talks in Oman in March 2013 and became the core bargain of the JCPOA.

2.4.2 Reaching the Unreachable: The JCPOA

"Until Obama and Rouhani, the history of U.S.-Iran engagement had been one of missed opportunities", do Mousavian and Toossi (2017, p. 66) observe. Hassan Rouhani was elected president in 2013, being a reformist, moderate candidate, not only willing to engage with the West but having experience with nuclear negotiations, leading them in the 2000s-talks with the EU3. Until then, US-Iranian relations had failed to reach a substantial solution to the nuclear question in all their encounters. Mainly,

engagement was hindered by a conservative administration in one of the countries - Khatami and Bush, Obama and Ahmadinejad. Furthermore, the inability of both sides to compromise - the Iranian to cede their programme at any point and the American to concede enrichment on Iranian soil - resulted in permanently stalemated discussions. This was about to change from 2013 on, with talks continuing over the years until the establishment of the so-called Nuclear Deal of Vienna in 2015.

The talks in Oman continued in several sessions during the subsequent months, followed by symbolic gestures such as a phone call between Obama and Rouhani or personal meetings between Kerry and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif, engaging in talks. Both sides were now committed to genuine engagement due to their leader's conviction and most crucially, the US had left its condition of "zero enrichment" (Gärtner and Akbulut 2017, p. 171). Being its bottom line, the concession of enrichment to Iran was the crucial point for the talks' success - guaranteeing the approval of Khamenei, alas domestic support. Thus, the negotiations had moved into the open again, with further talks in Geneva. Already in November 2013, both parties announced having gained an interim agreement, the so-called "Joint Plan of Action". The JPA was based on the same core bargain as the final agreement in 2015: the limitation of Iran's enrichment and its commitment to IAEA inspections to hinder a weaponization of the programme, accompanied by sanctions relief and ultimately guaranteeing Iran the right to a peaceful nuclear programme as provided by the NPT. (Hurst 2018, pp. 218–220; Mousavian and Toossi 2017, pp. 76–77)

Alongside the P5+1 and Iran, the High Representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy also took part in the negotiations and "ultimately became an integral part of the process" with its mediating role (Fakheri 2017, p. 10). The talks in Geneva were followed by those in Lausanne, where the so-called "Framework Agreement" was elaborated in April 2015. The final round took place in Vienna, which led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the 14th of July. Its primary goal is stated in the Preface of the Agreement: To "ensure that Iran's nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful", which both includes Iran's right to conduct an "indigenous nuclear program", and its commitment not to "seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons" under any circumstances (JCPOA 2015, p. 1). Additionally, the Nuclear Deal will result in a "lifting of all UN Security Council sanctions as well as multilateral and national sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme" (JCPOA 2015, p. 1). The main body of the

Agreement is structured into several parts, which are briefly described in the following abstracts: First, the measures Iran has to impose on its programme, which includes different limitations in the areas of enrichment and R&D, heavy water reprocessing, as well as transparency and confidence-building measures. Second, the sanctions relief, third the implementation plan of the treaty and fourth, the dispute resolution mechanism for the case of non-adherence, followed by Annexes providing detailed information on each of these parts and peaceful cooperation additionally[43] (JCPOA 2015, p. 1).

The measures in the first part of the treaty are designed to prevent both the uranium and the plutonium path to the bomb by prolonging the "breakout time"[44] from a few months to one year. All restrictions, however, will be lifted after a certain period, depending on the measure, between 10 and 15 years. Regarding the first weaponization path, the limitations primarily target the centrifuges at the Natanz and Fordow nuclear plants, as their enrichment capacity of 20% could relatively easily be augmented to weapons-grade. Therefore, about two-thirds of the installed centrifuges have to be removed. Furthermore, the production of centrifuges is banned for several years[45], and R&D on enrichment is limited as well. Most crucially, Iran has to conduct enrichment only below 3,67% at Natanz and not at all at Fordow. The stockpile of existing LEU has to be reduced to 300kg, while the spare has to be sold and up to 20% enriched uranium is solely allowed for industrial and medical purposes at the Tehran Research Reactor. (Samore 2015, pp. 23–26; JCPOA 2015, pp. 6–8)

The measures to prevent the second path apply to the heavy water reactor in Arak, the whose spent fuel could produce enough weapons-grade plutonium for at least one nuclear bomb per year. So, Iran has to rebuild the reactor to reduce its MW capacity and use LEU fuel enriched below 3,67%, while spent fuel is shipped out of the country. In addition, Iran pledges neither to conduct R&D on reprocessing nor to build any new HWR or accumulate heavy water for a period of 15 years. (Samore 2015, pp. 18–20; JCPOA 2015, pp. 8–9) To verify the compliance with the named measures, the third subchapter of the first part of the JCPOA describes the monitoring of the INP. For this, Iran has to implement the CSA with the IAEA, ratify the AP in the Majlis and follow

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[43] Annex I - nuclear related measures, Annex II - sanctions related measures, Annex III - civil nuclear cooperation, Annex IV - joint commission, Annex V - implementation plan
[44] The time needed from the status quo peaceful nuclear programme to the development of a NW.
[45] 8 or 10, depending on the type of centrifuge.

additional verification measures laid down exclusively in the JCPOA. While the former two are valid as long as Iran adheres to the NPT, the latter remains in effect between 10 and 25 years. Verification, which is mainly carried out by IAEA inspections, has the aim both to assure the compliance with JCPOA limits at Iran's declared nuclear facilities as well as to detect possibly undeclared plants or prohibited activities (Samore 2015, p. 31; JCPOA 2015, pp. 8–9).

The second part of the treaty specifies the sanction relief for Iran once the IAEA has verified Iranian adherence to the JCPOA measures. This involves lifting all UNSCRs[46] sanctioning Iran's nuclear programme, as well as terminating "the most economically damaging U.S. and EU nuclear-related sanctions" (Samore 2015, p. 58). Furthermore, all remaining sanctions will be lifted after eight years- if Iran remains compliant[47]. A reintroduction of the sanctions is also possible in case of Iranian defiance, a mechanism explained in the fourth part of the accord. In the third part instead, the implementation of the JCPOA is laid out: A UNSCR will back the accord, which will come into effect after 90 days at the latest ("Adoption Day"). Further, on "Implementation Day", sanction relief will start; while "Transition Day" may only happen 8 years afterwards or when that the IAEA concludes "that all nuclear material in Iran remains in peaceful activities" (JCPOA 2015, p. 18). Finally, "Termination Day" takes place, if the UNSCR backing the treaty, expires. As mentioned above, sanctions can also be re-introduced, in case of non-compliance. In such a case, the JCPOA describes a "dispute resolution mechanism" in its fourth and final part. If any of the parties involved in the treaty believe that another is not meeting its commitments according to the JCPOA, it can refer the issue either to the UNSC directly, which can re-impose sanctions or to the Joint Commission, consisting of the P5+1, Iran and the EU, who seeks to resolve the issue or decides to refer it to the UN. (Samore 2015, pp. 56–57) The treaty concludes with a series of annexes, regulating the content of the described parts of the JCPOA in detail.

The Nuclear Deal was the result of the most intense US-Iranian engagement after the Islamic revolution and thus, an unprecedented "major diplomatic achievement for all of the parties involved" (Hurst 2018, p. 246). Fakheri (2017, p. 2) views the agreement

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[46] Resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015).
[47] However, US-sanctions imposed on non-nuclear grounds, such as on Iranian human rights abuses will remain in force.

not only as a "success story" of multilateral negotiations but also a "precedent for dispute settlement through multilateralism and diplomacy" (Fakheri 2017, p. 14). Gärtner (2020, p. 56) goes even further, naming the Nuclear Deal "the best negotiated arms control agreement in history" and titling it "a diplomatic masterpiece"[48] (Gärtner and Akbulut 2017, p. 165). While Mousavian and Mousavian (2018, p. 180) refer to the JCPOA as a "win-win deal for Iran and the EU3 + 3", Hurst (2018, p. 253) stresses the "victory for moderate and pragmatic factions in both countries over their hard-line opponents". Indeed, while the agreement received "global support" (Fakheri 2017, p. 11), being also "welcomed by the vast majority of Iranians" (Hurst 2018, p. 224), both Iranian and US-hardliners, namely "Conservative Republicans and Democrat Party hawks" (Erlich 2018, p. 31), opposed the deal, and so did the US-allies Israel and Saudi Arabia. For the former, the accord was not a "win-win" treaty but making "too many concessions" (Erlich 2018, p. 32) to Iran, and they criticised the JCPOA for not stopping Iran's funding of "terrorist groups" or addressing its ballistic missile programme[49]. Furthermore, the limitations put upon Iran's programme were not lasting, but expiring after 15 years in most cases. Meanwhile, Iranian hardliners distrusted American commitment to the treaty and accused the US of being unwilling to allow a strengthened Iran (Fakheri 2017, p. 12). Ayatollah Khamenei, who had agreed to the Nuclear Deal, remained amongst the distrustful and "outright banned further U.S.-Iran negotiations beyond the nuclear issue" in the wake of the JCPOA, fearing an American "soft regime change"[50] (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p. 82).

Most prominently, the Republican party (alongside several Democrats) had been a fierce opponent to the deal even before its conclusion. Trying to hinder a successful implementation of the talks "by any procedural means"[51], they introduced the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act in early 2015, allowing Congress to review any treaty reached with Iran, approving, or dismissing it (Gärtner and Akbulut 2017, pp. 173–174). Obama thus had to work "extremely hard" to ensure the ratification of the Nuclear Deal in Congress, given its Republican majority and intense Israeli lobbying (Hurst 2018, p. 225). Finally, the firm commitment of the remaining P5+1 to continue with the implementation of the deal, even in case of non-ratification, contributed to the

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[48] "Ein diplomatisches Meisterstück" (original German wording)
[49] It was exactly the negligence of these issues that guaranteed the success of the deal, including them would have set the bar too high for Iranian approval.
[50] A regime-change from within the country by strengthening oppositional forces.
[51] "mit allen prozeduralen Mitteln" (original German quote)

successful ratification by the US, with the deal entering in force in January 2016 (Hurst 2018, p. 227). The Iranian Majlis had also ratified the agreement and the UN had issued Resolution 2231 for endorsement (Fakheri 2017, p. 8). In the aftermath of the treaty, some diplomatic engagement kept on between the US and Iran, such as talks about resolving the war in Syria or a major prisoner swap in 2016. In the face of domestic pressure and the ending Obama presidency, however, "nuclear engagement resulted in an extraordinary backlash to the idea of further U.S.–Iran engagement in both countries" (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p. 79), despite Iranian compliance. The US had resumed some coercive measures, such as the extension of the Iran Sanctions Act in 2016 and new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile programme, pursued by "congressional hawks", which put Obama under "immense domestic pressure" and Iran to accuse the United States of breaching the accord (Mousavian and Toossi 2017, p.80). Thus, the JCPOA signed the peak of engagement between both countries, and the election of Donald Trump in that very year meant the return to the "old" American pressure track.

2.5 President Trump: Stepping Backwards?

The outcome of the 2016 presidential election was widely unexpected: Being a former businessman and the initial outsider in the race, Donald J. Trump captured voters' support with his informal behaviour and rhetoric. With an excessive focus on negative campaigning, he defeated his democratic adversary, former Secretary of State and first female presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, who nevertheless, won the popular vote in the narrow race. While Trump would shape numerous unconventional approaches such as "alternative facts" or the use of a highly non-diplomatic language, frequently voiced through his Twitter account, his stance towards Iran is not unprecedented but resembles the conventional pre-Obama US-policies. Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA is, however, part of his newly-introduced rejectionist stance towards international agreements, embedded in its "America first" policy, such as the withdrawals from the Paris climate accord or the North American Free Trade Agreement demonstrate (Gärtner 2020, p. 57).

Trump had repeatedly criticized the accord alongside fellow Republicans as early as 2015 during his electoral campaign even before the deal had passed congress. In

September 2015, he participated at a joint rally with Republican Senator Ted Cruz and members of the Tea Party in Washington, campaigning against the Nuclear Deal. While Cruz described it as the "single greatest national security threat facing America", Trump stated: "Never ever, ever in my life have I seen any transaction so incompetently negotiated as our deal with Iran. And I mean never" (Zezima 2015). Both spoke of "catastrophic consequences" should the deal be implemented, "including death and the possibility of nuclear conflict" and pledged to undo or renegotiate the deal should they take office (Zezima 2015). Furthermore, Trump directly attacked the Obama administration for its engagement with Iran: "We are led by very, very stupid people. Very, very stupid people. We cannot let it continue" (Zezima 2015). Despite his peculiar rhetoric, Trump was by far not the sole opponent to the deal, as the opposition to its ratification, described in the previous chapter, demonstrates.

Trump took office in January 2017, and contrary to various other issues, his Middle Eastern policies has been "clear and consistent" from the beginning, led by "the organising principle (…) that Iran is the root of all evil" (Simon 2017, p. 209). Gärtner (2020, p. 58) identifies the "real argument" for this as the "hegemonic competition between the US and Iran in the region". Iran, feeling threatened by US influence on its road to regional hegemony, responds with counterinfluence over its neighbours, becoming, in turn, a threat to US interests (Gärtner 2020, p. 58). Such acts of "Iranian regional aggression" are the support of Yemeni rebels viewed as a threat by the Gulf States, mainly Saudi Arabia, who had become a US-ally, as well as Tehran's support for the Syrian regime or the Hezbollah, perceived as a threat to Israel (Simon 2017, p. 211). Israeli interests especially influenced the US-administration, being a traditionally close ally and given Trump's "cadre of conservative Jewish donors" (Simon 2018, p. 13). Simon (2017, p. 210) observes this perception in "Trumpian rhetoric", portraying Iranian hegemonic ambitions as the Shiite threat to Middle Eastern security, conveying "urgency and existential danger". Thus, the Trump administration naturally opposed the Nuclear Deal, calling for renegotiation on better terms for the US.

The present chapter's aim is - just as the previous one's - to provide contextualisation for the analytical part of the paper. The subsections focus, first, on the withdrawal of the JCPOA, analysing Trump's motifs and the arguments of the agreement's opponents. The re-imposition of sanctions is also outlined, questioning its effectiveness and consequences for the deal's survival and Iranian compliance.

Second, US-American unilateralism is described by focusing on recent developments such as the rising tensions with Iran and mounting divergence with the international community's approach, exemplified, by the rejection of the US-proposed "snap-back" through the UN. This chapter shows that Trump not only securitised the Iranian Programme itself, but also the Nuclear Deal. Due to the actuality of the events, scholarly literature post-2018 is rather limited, for which reason journalistic sources will be used for providing additional information.

2.5.1 Withdrawing from the Treaty: The "Bad Deal"

In May 2018 Trump started to follow words with deeds and withdrew from "'one of the worst deals' in history", re-imposing the US sanctions that had been lifted by the JCPOA (Mousavian and Mousavian 2018, p. 182). The withdrawal was "simply announced" (Laipson 2019, p. 120) by the president, as the treaty did not provide any procedure therefor. As early as 2017, Trump's non-certification of Iranian compliance hinted at his intentions of withdrawing from the accord. In line with the INARA, the president had to certify every 90 days, that Iran was still complying with the JCPOA. Being a solely US-American measure, Trump's move did not violate the JCPOA by non-certification. However, this signalled his unwillingness to further adhere to the agreement. His decision was not linked to the Iranian breaching of the accord, which was originally the reason for the adoption of this policy (Erlich 2018, p. 42). Contrary to the expectations of the INARA-initiators (and evidently, the Trump administration's hopes), "the Iranians have not cheated" (Simon 2018, p. 14) and therefore, the president took the decision based on rather different calculations, as Laipson (2019, p. 121) states:

> "Those who know the agreement, the diplomatic tradeoffs that went into its formation, and Iran's track record of compliance do not believe the Trump administration had compelling or credible grounds for withdrawal, other than the president's desire to demonstrate that he was following through on a campaign promise."

Besides keeping his election promise, Trump's aversion to the Nuclear Deal was due to his predecessor in office, as "he viscerally hated all of Barack Obama's policies" (Erlich 2018, p. 41) and wanted "to reverse every achievement of President Obama"

(Gärtner 2020, p. 57). Additionally, his perception of Iran as a threat to stability, his close ties to Israel and his dislike of international agreements further strengthened his choice to withdraw.

Despite widespread disagreement with the unilateral US approach amongst the world's leaders, there has been extensive criticism on the deal since it had come into action. For instance, Norell (2015, p. 288) speaks of a "flawed arms-control measure", making too many concessions to Iran and, thus, being "an all-out win for the Iranian regime" (p. 286). Furthermore, Kroenig (2018, p. 94) does not attribute any effectiveness to the JCPOA: "The deal does not prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons and in some ways actually makes it easier for Iran to go nuclear in the future". Concretely, the main points of criticism are the so-called "sunset clauses" (Kroenig 2018, p. 96), limiting the measures on Iran's nuclear programme temporally, the narrow focus of the agreement, especially leaving out its ballistic missiles programme as well as the concession of Iranian enrichment, undermining "a core tenant of the American non-proliferation policy"[52] and "setting a dangerous precedent" (Kroenig 2018., p. 96). Additionally, critics speak against the loosening of sanctions, as the "money is being freed up and Iranian influence strengthened" (Norell 2015, p. 290), to "drive the Americans out of the region" and "to weaken Israel" (p. 287). Thus, the opposition to the agreement is tightly linked to the perception of Iran itself: those who see the regime in Tehran as carving out influence by any means, a right preserved for the US, and suggest that the sole purpose of the programme is to gain nuclear weapons, also oppose the deal as a to "soft" measure against "the culprit" (Norell 2015, p. 286)[53].

However, the world's leaders, primarily the EU3, China and Russia, did not share the US point of view. They condemned the step, and expressed their further commitment towards the JCPOA - and so did Iran (Simon 2018, p. 16). The decision is especially notable for the EU, a traditional ally of the US, indicating a new era of American unilateralism regarding Iran. HR Federica Mogherini underlined the Union's commitment to the deal, as long as Iran would do so: "We are doing our best to keep Iran in the deal (…)" (Gärtner 2020, p. 67). While Trump tries to reach an eventual renegotiation of the deal with his coercion strategy, the Europeans see nothing but a

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[52] Form a legal standpoint, however, the right to enrich guaranteed by the NPT, outweighs US-policies.
[53] Norell describes the JCPOA as "reward" for Iran and its hegemonic ambitions, despite being "the culprit" (in the sense of "rogue state", note by the author).

risk of escalation due to such a tactic (Gärtner 2020, p. 68). The P4+1 therefore, immediately announced their ambitions to maintain the JCPOA, with the French Foreign Minister underlining that "the deal is not dead" (Al Jazeera 2018) and his German counterpart emphasising the deal's relevance for global security. Furthermore, UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres voiced his concerns, whereas Israel and Saudi Arabia backed the American decision (Al Jazeera 2018). Also, Hassan Rouhani, who had been re-elected as president in 2017, called for the US to "at least (…) respect UNSC Resolution 2231", as "there is no better way but dialogue" to handle disagreements between both countries and inviting the US "to come back to the negotiating table you left" (Gärtner 2020, p. 65).

While the lacking approvement of President Trump's decision by many of his allies was a symbolic backlash, he did not consider any change of policy: "In August 2018 Secretary of State Pompeo announced the founding of an 'Iran Action Group,' an elite team to start a campaign to put maximum diplomatic pressure on Iran with the aim of isolating it" (Gärtner 2020, p. 59). In the same month, President Trump announced heavy sanctions on Iran, amongst those, the prohibition of "using US currency" and barring trade and import of certain goods[54] (Rosenberger 2019, p. 80). Meanwhile, the Europeans were "angry and frustrated with Trump's America Alone approach", as Rosenberger (2019 p. 81) describes, given the enormous business and investment potential for European firms due to the immense Iranian energy resources. Therefore, the EU countered Trump's measures by an investment package and a so-called Blocking Statute, which allows businesses to circumvent US sanctions. However, the US answered by imposing secondary sanctions on those trading with Iran. (Gärtner 2020, pp. 67–68)

For the Iranians, on the other hand, the renewed imposition of sanctions had a devastating impact, considering the two years of eased sanctions had barely allowed the domestic economy to recover, as Rosenberger (2019) outlines in his paper. Furthermore, Trump's re-imposition of sanctions resulted in a turn towards Iranian hardliners, who oppose engagement with the US and use the withdrawal as proof of American untrustworthiness (Rosenberger 2019, p. 84). Therefore, sanctions, as previously outlined, were missing the target and will not encourage renewed negotiations, as the Iranian declining of such an offer shows: In 2018, in a somewhat

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[54] Such as trade of cars and metals (e.g., gold), as well as the export of aircraft and import of energy.

contradictory move to his general policy, Trump proposed talks with Iran, whose leaders, however, pointed out, that there will be no engagement unless the US would re-join the JCPOA (Gärtner 2020, p. 63). Finally, what remained was the question of "moral superiority over the US", which Iran could claim by abiding by the treaty and thus, international law (Gärtner 2020, p. 65). Their compliance was hampered by Trump's policies, proving once more the effective(less)ness of his approach: While Iran was compliant until 2018, after the withdrawal, the country started surpassing the allowed amount of enrichment[55] and the provided number of centrifuges during 2019. However, the IAEA also reported Iranian compliance in other fields, such as monitoring. (Laipson 2019, p. 121) Thus, the deal currently remains in a "twilight zone, neither robustly implemented (…) nor completely unraveling" (Laipson 2019, p. 125).

2.5.2 Pursuing Unilateralism: Ongoing Tensions

President Trump's unilateral policy towards Iran became evident in the aftermath of his withdrawal from the nuclear accord. While China and Russia had sided with Iran previously[56], the European split with the US is remarkable. Despite minor Iranian breaks of the agreement as well as secondary US sanctions, European leaders were committed to dialogue. French President Macron, for instance, outlined a plan for compromise at the G7 in 2019, to satisfy both Iranian and US-American demands aiming at an encounter of Trump with his Iranian counterpart, which however did not succeed (Laipson 2019, p. 122). Re-imposed sanctions and rising enrichment had hardened both sides' demands, similar to pre-Obama stalemates, with Macron being too weak for reviving dialogue, an option ultimately ruled out for the remaining Trump presidency. A rare moment of diplomacy between Iran and the US took place at the end of the year when officials met amidst a prisoner swap and speculations of a new deal were made - however, hopes were dashed by the following events (Toossi 2020).

By early 2020, tensions between both countries had risen and the military option was back on the table. In June 2019, the situation was on the brink of escalation, when an unmanned US surveillance drone was shot down by the Iranians with a surface-to-air

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[55] 4,5% instead of max. 3,67%
[56] Such as their substantial role in providing the country with material for its nuclear programme.

missile. With the exact location of the incident remaining disputed[57] and the Iranian announcement of non-compliance with JCPOA measures on enrichment just days earlier, the US administration agreed on a retaliatory strike towards Iran. The "operation was underway" and called back only at the last minute, just before firing missiles on Iranian targets. (Shear et al. 2019) This narrow escape to an escalation of violence repeated itself in January 2020 when a US-air strike killed a high-ranked Iranian general near Baghdad. Qasem Soleimani had been the commander of the Quds forces, "an elite unit" of the Iranian army's Revolutionary Guard Corps and was considered a "heroic national figure", being extraordinarily influential, "widely seen as the second most powerful figure in Iran, behind the Ayatollah Khamenei" (Doucet 2020). He had been conducting foreign operations in Syria and Iraq, supporting Syrian President Assad and the fight against ISIS. The US, on the other hand, had designated his Quds forces as a terrorist organisation and called Soleimani a terrorist, being responsible for numerous deaths, amongst them US personnel. The attack provoked widespread outrage in Iran, with large demonstrations throughout the country and inflammatory rhetoric from its leaders. Khamenei and Rouhani threatened with revenge, calling the US "criminal" and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted that the US would bear "responsibility for all consequences of its rogue adventurism" (Doucet 2020).

While the rhetorical escalation was not followed by concrete action, Trump continued on his maximum pressure track throughout 2020, invoking a snap-back sanctions procedure at the UN. Simultaneously, he called once more for renegotiating the Nuclear Deal in the aftermath of a minor prisoner swap between both countries in June. The Iranian side, however, declined talks voicing their pointlessness and even harmfulness due to the conservative turn inside the country, which had been marginalising reformists around Rouhani since the JCPOA withdrawal. (Toossi 2020) Therefore, Trump's approach lacked effectiveness in the face of the 2019/2020 events, as Toossi describes:

> "Trump is mistaken if he believes "maximum pressure" is getting him closer to a
> deal with Iran. The policy is not leading to Iran's capitulation or collapse, but

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[57] While the Iranians claimed to have defended their own air space, the US insisted the drone had been shot down in international airspace.

entrenching U.S.-Iran hostilities and keeping the United States perennially at the cusp of war in the Middle East."

In September, Trump issued an executive order targeting supporters of Iranian arms programmes, after having announced to invoke a snap-back in the previous month due to Iranian agreement-breaking regarding enrichment, stockpiles, and centrifuges (Scheffer 2020). While the IAEA had certified that Iran "was violating all JCPOA provisions" (Scheffer 2020), the country still insisted on the peaceful purpose of its programme. Nevertheless, the US demand was much disputed, over its withdrawal and the resulting (or lacking) right to voice such a demand - depending on the reading of the JCPOA and its UNSCR (Scheffer 2020). For the UN and the remaining members of the accord, the US had lost the right to invoke snap-back sanctions through its termination of the deal. The rejection by the UN was a "humiliating diplomatic setback" for the US, just as the termination of the conventional arms embargo within the end of October was, a measure provided by the JCPOA, though detested by the US (Wintour 2020). Trump's coercive policies took place despite the worldwide Covid-19-Pandemic, which had broken out in early 2020, and led to domestic public health crises in both Iran and the US, which as heavily affected countries dealt with high infection rates and death tolls, frequently distracting from other issues. Finally, in November, Joseph R. Biden won a narrow US election, denying Trump a second term in office. As outlined more in-depth in the concluding remarks, this will result in a change of the United States' Iran policy, as Biden, the former Vice-President under Obama, had called to re-join the JCPOA in the wake of the election (Scheffer 2020). Nevertheless, Trump pursued his offensive policies throughout the last weeks in office, considering military action against Iranian nuclear sites in mid-November. The potential target would have been Natanz, given that its uranium stockpile has been exceeding the limits of the JCPOA. His senior advisers, to whom Trump asked for attack options, however, dissuaded him from striking Iran, given the potential of escalation for the whole region. (Schmitt et al. 2020)

2.6 Still Threatening: Enduring US-Perceptions of Nuclear Iran

"Iran is a threat. There is hardly a U.S. president who has not served up this narrative since the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979", observes Bock (2020,

p. 32). Describing the development of the Iranian nuclear programme and (its impact on) the wider US-Iranian relationship from the Shah's time onwards, the present chapter has outlined the reasons for Bock's statement. At this point, the main findings of this first section, the contextualising part of the present work, are briefly summarized focusing on the US perception of the Iranian (nuclear) danger and linked to the section dealing with securitisation theory.

History plays a crucial role in the US-Iranian relationship and their perception of one another, a perception formed especially by specific historic events. The Islamic Revolution in 1979 and most importantly, the Hostage Crisis, were watershed moments for both countries' relations. From being the Shah's ally and supporting his plans for a nuclear programme, the US became hostile towards the regime in Tehran, perceiving it as irrational, fanatic and committed to WMDs. Nevertheless, Washington had already begun to object to the Shah's plans at the close of his regency, due to fears of a possible weaponization of the nuclear programme once Iran had mastered the fuel cycle. This was the primary reason for the perception of Iran and its nuclear programme as a danger: the fear of the use of nuclear arms in case of an escalating conflict. Furthermore, geopolitical considerations also contributed to the US mindset: Iran sought the role of the regional hegemony and as soon as its regime was not allied with the US, this meant an obstacle for US-interests, amongst them Iran's oil resources. Iran's religious leadership and hegemonic ambitions also threatened Israel, a close US-ally. While these factors do not directly involve the nuclear programme, their "danger" would be reinforced if Iran went nuclear. Thus, a NWS Iran would be a security and stability threat in the region and to (regional) US interests.

To counter the Nuclear Iranian threat, the US chose to freeze diplomatic relations, impose sanctions and use securitising rhetoric. Technically, the avoidance of the establishment of a domestic Iranian fuel cycle, which would enable enrichment and reprocessing, the two ways to the bomb, was the utmost priority, albeit being an unsuccessful one, as Iran mastered the cycle by a covert programme. Therefore, a cycle of mutual mistrust and failed US policy becomes evident: Iran tries to foster its regional role and aims to independently generate nuclear power, which the US perceives as a danger to its interests and tries to encounter with punitive measures. This, in turn, further confirms Iran's measures to achieve nuclear independence to face the US "threat", possibly even developing nuclear weapons to deter the US from an

attack. These ideas spur the US even further in their perception of Iran being "rogue". This resulted in a vicious circle that came close to escalation during the Nuclear Crisis of the 2000s and in early 2020. Thus, Hunter (2020, p. 26) stresses the importance of noting "the significant degree of continuity in US policy towards Iran" under both Democratic and Republican presidents. President Obama has been the only president who has succeeded in temporarily breaking this circle, as shown by the unprecedented engagement leading to the JCPOA. The treaty, despite being a diplomatic achievement, had the traditional US goal of hindering a nuclear-armed Iran.

But why is this "vicious cycle" continuing, why is the US not changing its perceptions on Iran, despite its compliance with the agreement? Bock (2020) explains this by so-called "mindsets" in his paper: pre-assumptions shape the image or perception of a threat. This is why the same action is interpreted differently by a state, depending on who is acting: if allies as Israel or France acquire nuclear arms, the US perceives no danger coming from it, while if Iran does so, it becomes an imminent threat to America. Such mindsets are unfalsifiable - according to the principle "one only see's what one wants to see". Thus, "it is not the weapons (available) themselves that constitute a threat, but the perception of the actor that holds the weapons and its (actual or supposed) intentions" (Bock 2020, p.36). This leads to continuous securitisation of Iran, allowing only partial de-securitisation, as the actions of American presidents have demonstrated. Mind-sets determine not only how politicians manifest themselves through political rhetoric, as the cited examples of Bush and Trump, as well as the analysis of the present work will show, but also by media such as Erlich[58] (2018) and Amin (2020) describe. By copying the image of Iranian danger from politics, US media tends to present biased coverage, assuring the audience's acceptance of Iran's securitisation. By his constructivist approach, Bock shows that security and threat are dependent on pre-assumptions, and therefore, are not something objective - similarly to the Copenhagen School, which is analysed in the subsequent chapter.

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[58] In Chapter Eleven

3. Tracing Theory: The Copenhagen School of Security Studies

As outlined in the previous chapter, the Iranian nuclear programme was perceived as a longstanding security threat by the US-administrations. The present work aims at tracing the discourse of the last two presidents regarding this issue. The so-called Copenhagen School from the field of Security Studies developed a suitable approach for such analysis: The securitising speech act poses an appropriate theoretical framework for constructed threats as it describes the process of an issue becoming a prioritized security matter. While the history section explained *why* the US opposes the Iranian programme, the theoretical chapter explains *how* such threats are constructed and framed as security issues, answering the research question, alongside part 4, which outlines how the threat is expressed.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold, the first being the brief contextualisation of the security concept and the emergence of Security Studies. While there is no universal definition of security on which scholars agree (Buzan 1991, pp. 16–17), the security concept has evolved primarily in terms of national security and military threats. Security Studies themselves have developed during the last century, comprising a vast number of theoretical strands, becoming increasingly critical of the narrow security concept. Despite this variety, Buzan and Hansen (2009, pp. 10–12) identify four questions structuring all debates in the field: The first, involves the referent object, the secured entity, and whether the state is prioritized in this role; the second deals with the nature of threats, namely whether they are both internal and external or not, which relates to the principle of territoriality; the third concerns the security sectors and whether non-military issues should be equally included as such, and the fourth is about threats and whether security has to be about danger and extreme responses to it. It is crucial to understand the Copenhagen School in this context, as it developed amid calls for a wider security approach, moving gradually away from the traditional concept. Thus, the first section of this chapter will involve a brief outline of the classical security approach and how it became questioned.

The second purpose of the chapter is to move further into the widening debate, focusing on the emergence of the Copenhagen School. Barry Buzan's early work "People, States and Fear" (1991) albeit being close to traditional state centrism, introduces what later became one of Copenhagen's main theoretical focuses: The broadening of the security sectors, including environmental, economic, political and

societal, additionally to the military. As the School developed, it moved away from the state as the only referent object, which demonstrates the concept's bridging between classical and new thought. The sectors and the levels of analysis are each outlined in a subchapter. Alongside the levels, the regional security complex is outlined, as the Copenhagen School focuses on regionalizing dynamics and subsystems. This shift in the analysis is due to the end of the Cold War, an issue at the system level, which had previously been the main event studied by security research. Though both levels and security complexes are subsumed in a single subchapter, they shall not be equated: While levels are mere frameworks for theories (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 6), the security complex is a theory itself.

Third, and most importantly, the securitising speech act is introduced. The speech act theory is based on a constructivist understanding of security, or, "as Ole Wæver might put it, where there is no constructed threat, there is no security problem" (Lipschutz 1995a, p. 224). The threat is created through the speech act, conveying the urgency to encounter an existential threat towards an entity, the referent object, with extraordinary means. Therefore, security is neither viewed by an objective nor a subjective conception, but by a discursive: security *is* a speech act (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 34). This approach is rooted in John L. Austin's speech act theory, which is briefly outlined alongside Copenhagen's understanding of security and a description of the steps of the securitising process. Furthermore, the concept of de-securitisation is described, which is the ultimate goal of the securitisation process. Nevertheless, de-securitisation and simultaneous (de-)securitisation are theoretically underdeveloped processes.

Finally, the chapter concludes by summarizing securitisation theory in describing the process of analysis, as proposed by Buzan et al. (1998), functioning as a connecting passage to the following methodological part of the work.

3.1   The Origins: Security as an Evolving Concept

"International Security Studies (ISS) grew out of debates over how to protect the state against external and internal threats after the Second World War. Security became its watchword" - this introductory statement to Buzan's and Hansen's (2009, p. 8) comprehensive book on the emerging ISS points out the origins of Security Studies

and its intertwining with the concept of the modern nation-state exposed to military threats based on the realist thought of international relations. Thus, while ISS is not equitable or interchangeable with IR, "there are inevitable overlaps" (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 17) between both fields, with a boundary being "difficult to draw" (p. 16). Stritzel and Vuori (2016, p. 41) observe that "questions of security had been at the heart of international relations" since its early days, making IR a somewhat overarching discipline. Similarly, Buzan (1991, p. 3) describes security "as a concept in International Relations", though an "underdeveloped" one, in his work "People, States and Fear". Therefore, the evolution of security has been a matter of continuous debates and the emergence of new schools of thought, especially during the 1990s. By the time of Buzan's book release[59], the Security Studies comprised Strategic Studies, Arms Control and Peace Research, all neglecting the security concept (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 105; Buzan 1991, p. 2). However, in the aftermath of the Cold War, numerous new thinking schools with an expanded security understanding developed, leading to what Stritzel and Vuori (2016, p. 42) call a "fragmentation of the concept". The various strands of theory comprised constructivist, post-colonial, feminist and critical thoughts, with ongoing debates on positioning the different, though overlapping concepts, amongst them Copenhagen School (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 191).

But why were scholars throughout the 1990s so determined to expand the concept of security and what was the traditional perception of security that these authors rejected as too narrow for the changing international environment post-Cold War? For this, it is necessary to take a look at the emergence of the field. The International Security Studies developed out of military studies after WWII (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 1). Distinguishing themselves by focusing on security rather than defence and analysing the then-recent developments of the Cold War such as nuclear deterrence, thus the avoidance of fighting[60], their studies were still "defined by a largely military agenda" considering the Soviet Union as a primarily military threat to the West, mainly the United States (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 3). Thus, the security perception of the early thought was a national one, which is "arguably still (…) the most influential notion of security" (Stritzel and Vuori 2016, p. 42). The idea of national security is closely tied

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[59] For the present thesis, the second edition of Buzan's work (1991) is used. However, the book had been published already in 1983, being the year referred to in this context.
[60] During the Cold War, nuclear weapons functioned as deterrent factor towards war, as the consequences of a nuclear war would have been devastating for all involved parties.

to the dominance of (neo)realism in IR. Realist thought is based on an international system determined by anarchy, in which states are the primary actors following their self-interests to persist and interstate relations have merely strategic reasons (Krause and Williams 1997, pp. 39–40). As a rational actor in an anarchic environment, the realist state is a guarantor of security, as "there can be no security in the absence of authority, the state" (Krause and Williams 1997, p. 40). However, the state is not merely a provider of security but also a referent object of it. Coined by Buzan, this term is used for the threatened entity, which at this point of evolution was exclusively the state (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 135). The realist state is a nation-state according to the Westphalian understanding[61], determined by sovereignty and territoriality (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 24) and as a such primarily exposed to a specific type of threat, as Lipschutz (1995b, p. 5) describes:

> "There exist threats to the territory of one state posed by the activities of other states. In this neorealist world, with each state in command of a discrete territory and population, and with each capable of monopolizing the legitimate use of force within that territory, the essential security function remains, (…) self-defense and, if necessary, war. Other threats may exist and be of concern to governments but, according to the traditional line of thinking, they are not security threats."

Thus, the realist state is exposed to external threats of military nature. In this narrow definition of security, non-military matters are deemed as incapable to endanger the state's security. This thinking was dominant throughout the Cold War period, and emerging ISS in the 1940s and '50s was known under the term of Strategic studies, focusing on the nuclear stand-off, involving elements of game theory and concepts such as the MAD-logic[62], thus being heavily determined by "strategic aspects of the superpower rivalry" (Buzan and Hansen 2009, pp. 66–79).

While the emphasis on the military dimension persisted throughout early Security Studies, the discipline soon faced internal differentiation: Both Arms Control and Peace Research were challenging the Strategic core[63]. They were advocating détente instead

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[61] The Westphalian Peace of Münster and Osnabrück marked the end of the Thirty Years-War (1648), pledging to avoid further wars and setting the ground for the current system of sovereign territorial nation-states in Europe; the IR school of Realism grounds on this state-concept.
[62] Mutual Assured Destruction, given if a state possesses (nuclear) second strike capability, assuring the destruction of whoever would strike first; war would result in the complete destruction of both sides and is thus avoided; both disarmament and protection systems (such as anti-ballistic missiles) would terminate MAD and striking would be appealing to the protected/non-disarming state.
[63] The positioning of the strands is problematic due to their interweaving, therefore Buzan and Hansen (2009, pp. 104-106) describe Arms control and Peace research as challengers of Strategic studies as

of deterrence and changing the security perspective to the extent that the weaponry itself, not merely the attack on one's state constituted a danger, seeing "nuclear weapons themselves as the main source of threat" (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 109). Therefore, the referent object was no longer the national state, but the individual or humankind itself, given the "collective risk of survival" it was exposed to by nuclear weapons (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p.101). Nevertheless, security concepts remained marginal in this research, standing in the shadow of peace policies such as arms control, disarmament, and international cooperation[64] (Buzan 1991, p. 9). This focus is one of several reasons Buzan (1991, pp. 5-11) describes as the cause for the weak conceptualization of security: Peace research is rooted in the Idealist school of thought, an early IR theory, contrasting realism by its conviction of international cooperation and organisations as overcoming anarchy and war. While their ideas were somewhat realized in today's United Nations, its predecessor, the League of Nations, had failed during the Interwar period, as did the concept of collective security. This failure resulted in a double throwback for a further conceptualization of security at large: First, the Idealists undertook an ideological shift towards peace as the prevailing issue of study instead of security and second, it reinforced the dominance of Realism in IR. Realist thought was neglecting security to the extent that it used the concept interchangeably with that of power. As Buzan (1991, p. 2) observes: "Security is not the only concept through which the national security problem can be approached. Traditionally, most of the literature (…) was (…) based on the concepts of power and peace". While for realism, security is "derivative of power", for idealists it is "a consequence of peace" (Buzan 1991, p. 2) and thus still underdeveloped as a concept on its own.

It was not until the 1980s, that "a gradual shift from 'peace' to 'security' as the guiding concept" has initiated amongst critics of Strategic studies (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 135). While scholars had already started to reject the narrow military security concept before the fall of the Soviet Union[65], it was the end of the Cold War that unquestionably challenged existing thought on an unprecedented level and spurred further contextualisation in the middle term. For the moment, the meta-event of ISS

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well as Arms control being rooted in Strategic Studies and Peace research, and Peace studies being also a branch of Arms control.

[64] cf. arms limitations treaties such as the Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT, START), Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM), or the NPT.

[65] e.g. Buzan's "People, States and Fear", published in 1981, widening the military security concept by additional issues, described at 3.2.2.

had disappeared, and its end resulted in "a period of [academic] disorientation" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 3) and the rise of "fundamental questions about the field's survivability" (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 184). One of the major challenges posed the vanishing of the primary threat of hitherto security thought, the Soviet Union. With the "single enemy" gone, a variety of new threats arose and the situation complexified, as Lipschutz (1995a, p. 219) points out: "Now, (…) there are enemies everywhere". However, as Krause and Williams (1997, p. 36) describe[66], security is a "historically variable condition", changing drastically over time, being constituted by and understood in the context of contemporary world politics. Thus, the field of ISS managed to persist beyond the end of the Cold War by undergoing a significant transformation on the verge of the 1990s. A principal line of division occurred between those advocating the need for a broadened concept of security in the face of new, non-military threats arising in the international system and those adhering to the status quo, the narrow concept. This new split in thought eliminated previous distinctions in large parts: Those continuing to focus on military issues became known as Post-Cold War Traditionalists, including Strategists, Arms Controllers and Peace Researchers, overcoming hitherto divisions, while those aiming at a widening of security established various strands of theory, amongst them Copenhagen School. (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 156)

3.2   Widening the Concept: Copenhagen's Emergence

The traditional security concept based on the state being exposed to military threats had been increasingly questioned throughout the 1990s. Nevertheless, the scholarly calls for widening the concept have not been "coordinated with each other" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 1) before Buzan's, Wæver's and de Wilde's joint work "Security: A new framework for Analysis" was released in 1998, intending to fill this research gap by theorization. The "Comprehensive New Framework for Security Studies" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 1) aimed first at broadening traditional thought by adding new, non-military sectors as security issues and second, describing how such issues become securitised, along with specific criteria distinguishing them from political issues (p. 5). Already Buzan's (1991) "People, States and Fear", on which the work is founded, had

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[66] Both scholars of Critical Security, a thought established in the 1990s.

introduced new, non-military threats and focused on regionalizing dynamics, in contrast to the established focus on the military and global level in the Cold War era. Thereby he constituted the early basics of what became known as the "Copenhagen School". This term was not self-referential but coined by Bill McSweeney (1996, p. 81), a prominent critic of the thought, referring to the interrelated publications of scholars at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI), most prominently Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, also described as the "core" of the emerging thinking school (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 212). They represented the main parts of the new theory: While Wæver primarily worked on the securitising speech act, outlined in the following chapter, Buzan focused on the widening of security, a concept he described as "essentially contested" (1991, p. 15) due to its numerous contradictions and difficulties, amongst these determining the referent object and its applicability across sectors. The referent object is the threatened entity or, as Buzan puts it, "what is it that has to be secured" (1991, p. 15).

In a post-Cold War world, in which military tensions are declining, the space is open to new threats of non-military origin (Buzan 1995, p. 196). While not excluding the military component, Buzan adds four new types of threat in "People, States and Fear", which are further elaborated as sectors in "A New Framework": the political, the societal, the economic and the environmental. Similarly to the threats, the focus of the level of analysis shifted after the Cold War, as the hitherto global level, "useful for studying the great powers and (…) systemic referent objects" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 11) was insufficient for sub-systemic issues. Therefore, the Copenhagen School focuses on regionalizing dynamics and Buzan developed the regional security complex theory within the frame of the sub-systemic level. In the following chapter, first, the Copenhagen School's levels of analysis are described with references to Buzan's earlier work, and an overview of his regional security complex theory is given, and second, the security sectors are described, as well as their interaction.

3.2.1 Levels of Analysis and Security Complexes

Issuing longstanding debates in International Relations, the levels of analysis play a leading role in providing a theoretical framework. According to the Copenhagen thought, levels, despite not being theories themselves, pose the "framework within

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which one can theorize" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 6), as both sources and outcomes of explanations are located in them. This proves useful to theories' patterns of argumentation, for example, the state and the unit level for anarchy and self-interested behaviour respectively in Neorealism[67]. In the realm of Security Studies, levels are used to locate actors, referent objects and dynamics. While Buzan's earlier work focuses primarily on the domestic (state), regional and international level, Copenhagen School expands this to the five levels, which are most commonly used in IR (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 5-6): The international system, the international subsystem, the units, the sub-unit level, and the individuals.

First, the international system, the widest level, comprises all states worldwide (Buzan et al. 1998, p.5). During the superpower rivalry of the Cold War, this global level had been dominant alongside realist thinking, involving the anarchy of the international system and concepts such as the security dilemma and nuclear weapons-related theories (e.g. MAD-logic). However, with the "disappearance of bipolarity (…) regional and local security problems gained in prominence" (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 177). This development was the natural consequence of the end of bipolarity, as the rivalling superpowers no longer interfered in regional matters, giving local powers "more room for manoeuvre" (Buzan and Wæver 2003, p. 3). Therefore, the hitherto marginal concept of regional security was increasingly addressed by scholarship, mainly in a non-Western and non-nuclear context. For example, events such as the Gulf War of 1990-91 or the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East-region were analysed (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 178). Regions are part of, second, the international subsystem level, alongside other "groups of units" distinguishing themselves by particular interdependence within the international system, for example, the OECD (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 6).

Buzan (1991, pp. 186-221) had stressed the new relevance of regional security, dedicating a whole chapter in "People, States and Fear" to the issue, introducing the security complex theory[68]. This approach is based on a relational understanding of security, as "one cannot understand the national security of any given state without understanding the international pattern of security interdependence in which it is

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[67] The anarchy at the system level leads to a self-help outcome at the unit level, as every state tries to follow its own interests to persist in the anarchic system.
[68] Further works followed, most prominently "Regions and Powers" by Buzan and Wæver in 2003, including a detailed analysis of all regional complexes.

embedded" (Buzan 1991, p. 187). However, despite states being "enmeshed in a global web of security independence", in an anarchic system[69] "insecurity is often associated with proximity" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 11) as "most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones" (Buzan and Wæver 2003, p. 4). Insecurities among neighbours thereby exist independently from the global level. Buzan presents Israel and Syria as examples: Their rivalry occurs regardless of their superpower affiliation[70] (1991, p. 187). Therefore, the need for an intermediate level arises to fill "the gap between the state and the system levels" (Buzan 1991, p. 187): The regional level, on which the regional security complex is located, whereby region is defined as a "subsystem of security relations [that] exists among a set of states whose fate is that they have been locked into geographical proximity with each other" (p. 188). The security complex, on the other hand, arises by common security relations and is "defined as *a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another*"[71] (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 12). Thus, geography and shared security relations within the complex defines it and sets it apart from other complexes or states: "Security interdependencies will be more strongly focused among the members of the set than they are between the members and outside states" (Buzan 1991, p. 193). Therefore, Iran and Iraq are part of the same Middle Eastern complex, due to strong security relations - or *in*security as in this case - while Iran and Pakistan (South Asian complex) are located in different complexes given their weak interdependence (Buzan 1991, p. 193). Noteworthy, the nature of (in)security links can be shaped by both amity and enmity, depending on various issues such as historical links, ideologies or population- and border-related interests (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 190).

The third level consists of units, namely actors with an elevated level of cohesion such as states or nations (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 6). Buzan describes this as the "domestic" level in "People, States and Fear", comprising the "security environment of single states" (1991, p. 200), namely national security. Buzan agrees with Wæver on the significant role of national security, as security policies are primarily a matter of states. Therefore, "the concept of security is posited at the level of the 'state'" and "the issue

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[69] Despite his calls for widening the security concept and criticizing the traditional approach, Buzan uses realist assumptions (considering its academic dominance at the time) such as the anarchic nature of the international system, which impacts the concept of security.
[70] The first edition written in 1983, when his work was still influenced by Cold War dynamics.
[71] Buzan et al. use the definition by H.A. Simon in "The Architecture of Complexity" (1962, p.106).

of 'security' has to be read through the lense of 'national security'" (Wæver 1989, p. 36). Nevertheless, states shall not be analysed merely from the "spot" of "one's own state" (Wæver 1989, p. 35), as national security relies on the interaction with the international and sub-state level, demonstrated through Wæver's so-called "hourglass model" of security. Thus, these dynamics should be focused and broadened, viewing not only state-to-state relations but also state relations towards the international and sub-state level.

Furthermore, Buzan also sees states as "the principal referent object of security" (Buzan 1991, p. 22), a condition imposed by anarchy. The threats to which states are exposed can originate from other states or within the state itself, both sources being of equal gravity: "States can be just as thoroughly disrupted and destroyed by internal contradictions as they can by external forces" (Buzan 1995, p. 189). Nevertheless, it depends on the type of state by which threat they are affected most: Buzan distinguishes between strong and weak states. While this distinction cannot be drawn by a single indicator; some conditions determine the strength of states, such as the degree of political violence, ideological conflicts and lack of national identities or political authority (Buzan 1995, p. 100). Strength is, therefore, mainly about socio-political cohesion, and thus, not interchangeable with power, which refers to military and economic capabilities "in relation to each other" (Buzan 1995, p. 97): For example, Austria or Norway are weak powers but still strong states, while the US is both a strong and powerful state. Strong states possessing characteristics such as strong national identities and low levels of political conflict aim to maintain and protect their territory, citizen, welfare etc. by defending them towards external threats: "Where the state is strong, national security can be viewed primarily in terms of protecting the components of the state from outside threat and interference" (Buzan 1995, p. 100). Therefore, strong states are mainly exposed to external threats, whereas weak states have a "high level of concern with domestically generated threats" and in cases of low socio-political cohesion and weak national identity there may not even be a national object that can be defended (Buzan 1995, p. 101). Thus, the weaker a state, the harder it is to define the RO of national security.

Therefore, in very weak states "it can be more appropriate to view security (…) in terms of the contending groups, organizations and individuals, as the prime objects of security" (Buzan 1995, p. 104). These are acting below the state level: On the fourth,

the sub-unit level, consisting of organized groups trying to influence units (e.g. lobbies) (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 6). Nevertheless, weak states may also be exposed to external threats, becoming prey to external interests due to their political fragmentation. Considering this, the external threat is always intricately linked to domestic security in weak states, making them "chronically insecure" (Buzan 1991, p. 106).

Finally, fifth, individuals, are the "bottom line" of analysis (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 4), being "the irreducible basic unit" to which security is applied (Buzan 1991, p. 35). Individual security is also linked to national security, described by Buzan (1991, p. 363-364) as being "locked into an unbreakable paradox in which it[72] is partly dependent on, and partly threatened by the state". As mentioned above, individuals or groups can become a threat to the state, even to the point of threatening "the existence of the state as a meaningful entity" (Buzan 1991, p. 364) if "terrorists", separatists or revolutionaries are involved (p. 52). Likewise, the state can be threatened by citizen acting in another state's interest. On the other hand, states can also threaten individuals in both direct and indirect ways, such as through law enforcement, political actions against certain groups, struggle over state control and through external security policies (Buzan 1991, p. 44). While this shows the interrelation between the levels, also a blurring between both the individual and national level can occur, in the case of leaders - individuals getting in charge of the state - and even become indistinguishable in the case of dictatorships (Buzan 1991, p. 54).

3.2.2 Security Sectors Intertwined

The second aspect of widening the security concept regards the sectors, which extend beyond the military of the traditional national security approach to the ecological, economic, societal and political themes. But what are sectors? Buzan et al. (1998, p. 7) define them as "specific types of interaction" regarding various security issues:

> "In this view, the military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status, and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production, and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the

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[72] The individual (note by the author)

environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere."

Buzan had described them already previously as "types of threats" in "People, States, and Fear", in the chapter about "national insecurity" (Buzan 1991, p. 116). This demonstrates that Buzan still referred the state to these threats in his early work. By the time of "A New Framework", the Copenhagen School had decided "to move away from (…) [the] placement of the state as the central referent object in all sectors" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 7). Nevertheless, the state remains an important actor across all sectors. Besides the threatened entity (the referent object), the Copenhagen School describes the actor depicting the threat as such (securitising actor), further involved actors (functional actors)[73] and the level of analysis for each sector. In the following, the five sectors are briefly outlined alongside examples.

While the scholars of Copenhagen School "argue against the view that the core of Security Studies is war and force and that other issues are relevant only if they relate to war and force" and focus on a "wider agenda" of security instead, they do not exclude the military sector but aim to "incorporate the traditionalist position" and explore "threats that are nonmilitary as well as military" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 4). Thus, the first sector is the military, which traditionally was the main concern of national security. Buzan defines the latter as a state's ability "to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity" (Buzan 1991, p. 116) and the military as the still most urgent of threats. Therefore, the military sector involves primarily threats to the territorial integrity of a state but can also affect non-state entities such as nations, tribes, or pre-states, which often aim at acquiring statehood. Furthermore, principles such as international law or non-proliferation can also be referent objects. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 52–55) Military threats mainly involve the use of force in form of wars, threatening "everything in a society"- the lives of the citizen, as well as a society's political and socio-economic achievements - and thus, being the "existential threat par excellence" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 58). The abandonment of "normal" politics such as diplomatic relations and the use of force distinguishes the military sector from all other sectors, being the reason for its long-standing primacy in thought, according to Buzan (1991, pp. 116-118).

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[73] These units are described in more detail under 3.3.

As described above, the referent objects in this sector can be threatened both internally and externally. First, internal threats, involve rebel or secessionist movements (e.g. Kurds) that claim statehood and therefore threaten the state's sovereignty. Besides these "would-be states", (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 53) other non-state-actors such as militias or mafias also pose a threat to the state, not by seeking to replace it but by circumventing its regulations by criminal means and undermining the state's effort to maintain civil peace, law and administration. In extreme cases, for instance, in failed states, these groups overtake power and de facto replace the state. On the other hand, such groups may become referent objects themselves if functioning states use military power against them. Second, external military threats are also twofold: On the one hand, the actual military capabilities of a country, on the other, the *perception* of a country's capabilities and intentions, with the latter leading to responses "on prospective future capabilities rather than on present ones" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 52). These perceptions are influenced by various variables such as geographical proximity - vicinity usually equates to bigger threat -, political recognition or ideology, and history, which frequently leads to an "impact of past experience on present perception" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 59). Thus, similarly to what Bock (2020) describes, once enmity towards a certain state is established, its capabilities will always be interpreted as threats, regardless of their actual size, which is the case for the US-Iranian relationship. As the threats regard the state's integrity, the securitising actors of the military sector are mostly state elites or representatives of international organisations. Furthermore, functional actors comprise both agencies and instruments of force (e.g. mercenaries and arms companies) and various sub-units of states such as governments[74], ministries (e.g. Defence Ministry), parts of the armed forces and private players such as firms. Traditionally, military threats are found at the system level, as in the case of the superpowers during the Cold War. However, the regional has increasingly become the dominant level, with dynamics differing from region to region. While in some regions like Europe military threats have de facto vanished, they are still persistent in others. Finally, in weak states with fragmented societies localizing dynamics are found, eroding political order. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 52–69; Buzan 1991, pp. 116–118)

In contrast to the first, the following are "new" sectors, given the increasing relevance of non-military issues in the post-Cold War period. However, some of these threats

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[74] "Governments" means the "holders of military power" and are not equitable to the state as they may be interested in their own survival regardless the state's (such as staying in power).

have been rising separately from the end of the Cold War, such as environmental hazards (Buzan 1991, p. 369). Therefore, the second sector, the environmental one, is an entirely new security threat, as natural disasters had long been perceived as "random (…) natural conditions of life" or even "fate" (Buzan 1991, p. 131) paired with lacking knowledge about climate change and the increasing human pollution. The environmental sector involves a wide range of issues: The exploitation of natural resources, unsustainability, various forms of pollution and consequentially the destruction of ecosystems; population and food problems such as overgrowth, famines, epidemics and socioeconomic consequences such as inequality. Thus, the referent object is similarly broad, encompassing "the environment" on the one hand and maintenance of human civilisation on the other, both being interrelated. The ecological sector comprises several types of threats: First, the environment threatens the human without the latter's involvement (natural disasters); second, the human threat to the environment that in turn has effects that pose an existential threat to civilisation and third, the latter endangering but not existentially threatening civilisation. Environmental issues tend to be linked to other sectors, such as socio-politics (e.g. migrants fleeing from natural disasters). In such cases, the securitising actors are varied, states are amongst the most prominent, but primarily it is epistemic communities providing the scientific basics as well as NGO activists and lobbyists. The Copenhagen School identifies also veto actors in this sector, which are opposing the securitising ones, such as agricultural and industrial lobbies or states[75] and firms. Furthermore, functional actors involve a wide range of economic actors (e.g. agricultural industry) and IGOs or international law. Due to the extent of environmental threats, they are essentially found on the systemic level, especially in the case of climate change. Despite the global concern, both causes and consequences of ecological issues are also found on regional and local levels. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 71–85; Buzan 1991, pp. 131–133)

As a third sector, Copenhagen School describes the economic, which is the most complex and controversial one, as markets in capitalist systems are supposed to be based on uncertainty and risk, or in other words, insecurity. Threats are, therefore, part of the game and their classification as "existential" is problematic. Furthermore, strong interdependence makes the "black or white" distinction between "enmity and amity"

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[75] States can both oppose or advocate for certain environmental policies and are, therefore, opposing or part of the securitising process.

inherent to the military sector, unsuitable (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 99). As the concept of economic security is a blurred one, its referent objects are overlapping as well and include individuals, sub-units (e.g. classes), states or the global market itself. What classifies as an existential threat depends on the RO: For individuals, it is the lack of basic needs, mainly food security, while for states or firms it may be bankruptcy. However, the latter is much disputed as states nevertheless continue to exist and the firm's disappearance constitutes only an existential economic threat if it threatens the economy itself (e.g. major banks). Securitising actors are partly interchangeable with the RO, being state representatives and firms; the latter frequently being functional actors. On the whole, there is a strong "overspill" effect regarding economic security, as the consequences frequently affect survival in other sectors (e.g. socio-political consequences of inequality or weapons trade). Merely the fears of an international systemic crisis are "clearly economic security issues" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 116). Therefore, the systemic level is dominant due to globalization trends; regional dynamics are also visible (e.g. EU, Free Trade Areas), while locally merely consequences manifest themselves. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 95–116)

The fourth, the societal sector, one of the main focuses of the Copenhagen School, is of increasing relevance, especially vis-á-vis political security, given the weakening concept of territorial nation-states. This results in a shift towards certain groups in a society threatened by issues that do not necessarily threaten the state (Wæver 1995, p. 67). Contrary to the political sector, societal security is not about sovereignty and the organization of states but involves identity, not necessarily of nations but of so-called "identity groups" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 119). Societal is not equated with "social" but with "society", and as society is composed of individuals identifying themselves "as members of a particular community" it is understood as both "Gesellschaft" and "Gemeinschaft" (Wæver 1995, p. 67). If this collective identity, the "we", is threatened, the group becomes a referent object. Identities are tied to various indicators that identify the concrete threats: cultural habits may be threatened by global "westernisation", multi-ethnic identities by nationalism, or in the case of language-based identity (e.g. France), current anglicization poses a threat. Concretely, the referent objects are nations or nation-like entities such as ethnic groups, further religions or tribes. Buzan et al. define three key issues that can threaten social security identities: First, migration through its influxes on the local population (e.g. Chinese in Tibet); second, horizontal competition through which neighbouring cultures are about

to change local ones (e.g. Americanization fears in Canada); and third, vertical competition, when identities are changed by either widening through integrating projects (e.g. Yugoslavia) or narrowing by secessionist ones (e.g. Kurds). A possible fourth issue would be depopulation through natural disasters or war; this is however fusing with other sectors. Thus, the main actors in the societal sector are individuals in state power positions, both executive - who mostly refer to the state instead of the nation - and oppositional, and the media, reinforcing the "us" – "them" dynamics of the securitising process. Societal security issues take place regionally, inter-regionally and globally, the latter becoming increasingly relevant due to the global North-South divide and the "clash of civilizations", especially the homogenizing Westernisation trends and their reactionist answers (e.g. from Islamism). (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 119–138) Buzan (1991, p. 123) refers also to the sub-state level.

The fifth and final sector, the political sector, is best summarized as the non-military threats to a state's organizational stability and sovereignty or international society and law. Similar to the economic sector, it is difficult to draw the boundaries on the political one, given that it is the widest of all: "In some sense, all security is political" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 141). Therefore, the target of political threats is not merely the state institutions but "the idea of the state" (Buzan 1991, p. 119), its identity and ideology. While the territorial state constitutes the main referent object, it is not the sole: Quasi supra-states such as the EU, self-administering stateless entities from the societal sector such as minorities or tribes, and transnational movements (e.g. world religions to some extent) can be targets of political threats, too. Consequently, the referent object arises if an "authoritative voice claims the survival of the unit is at stake" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 146). Such voices or actors are primarily leaders, as most entities have them, and governments or institutions in the case of states and the EU, respectively. Furthermore, also the media or IGOs may also qualify as securitising actors, such as the UN under Chapter 7 of the Charta[76]. As described above, threats depend on the strength of states, with weak ones being more vulnerable to internal and strong to external ones. As is the case in the military sector, the sovereignty of the state is threatened through non-military means such as the denial of recognition or legitimacy. For example, one of the US' aims against the Soviet Union was to weaken domestic legitimacy, due to the contesting ideologies of capitalism and communism. Apart from

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[76] This chapter allows the UN to invoke coercive measures against states (e.g., sanctions) if they behave as a threat to international peace.

ideology, the disregard for international laws or principles poses political threats to international ROs. These involve the violation of human rights or international agreements - such as the NPT. Iran's nuclear programme falls into this category, in the sense that it threatens the international principle of non-proliferation. However, when such a state's behaviour is sanctioned by the UN, the threat and referent object are "reversed", becoming the national sovereignty threatened by intervention. As these examples suggest, the levels are strongly interrelated in the political sector. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 141-154)

For the political sector, Buzan et al. (1998, pp. 155-159) identify nine types of dynamics between levels which are briefly outlined. First, threats to weak states given their state-nation split provoking irredentist tendencies (e.g. Kurds in Turkey or Kashmir in India); second, also primarily regarding weak states, threats of political-ideological kind such as the non-acceptance of regime's ideologies (e.g. Cuba by US or North- and South Korea); third, and fourth consist of the same type as the first and second, however, in contrast to them, the threat is *un*intentional. Third involves, for example, the not intentioned threat by the Russian minority in Estonia and fourth, those of India and Pakistan due to mutually exclusive ideas of the state. Fifth, the threat of and to supranational integration such as the EU that poses a sovereignty threat to states and whose nationalism threatens the EU; sixth, systemic threats to states vulnerable due to their state-nation split (e.g. nationalism in Austria-Hungary); seventh, systemic threats on political-ideological grounds (e.g. international community towards South African Apartheid); eighth, threats to transnational movements with a loyalty doctrine (e.g. Islamist extremism) and finally, ninth, threats to the international community and its principles and laws (e.g. North Korean proliferation violating NPT). These dynamics are mostly evolving on the inter-state (often bilateral) level with regionalizing trends or the global level, rarely on the local.

Despite the levels and sectors being outlined separately, they are strongly interrelated, as their description indicates. Threats from different sectors are present at each level and each sector can be found at various levels. Nevertheless, not all issues are equally present at each level. The Copenhagen School concludes that there are strong regionalizing trends visible in the military, political and societal sectors, while the question, if regions are the same in all sectors, remains open: "Is military Europe the same as political Europe and societal Europe?" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 166). Therefore,

Buzan et al. (1998, p. 166) merely define "relatively coherent regions" if they are similar across sectors (e.g. Middle East or Southeast Asia). In the economic sector, on the other hand, the global level is dominant, and so is the environmental - regarding the debate, whereas consequences are visible at the local level. Furthermore, sectors are also closely interrelated, with causes or consequences of issues originating in another sector: Independency wars are for example frequently rooted in identity issues, thus the societal, not military sector. Therefore, Buzan et al. (1998, p. 167) describe "the purpose of such a disaggregating exercise", the description of sectors one by one, being the putting of security "back together" as sectors exist in units (e.g. the state) as different security concerns, not units in sectors. Therefore, in the analysis sectors are not viewed separately: "A specific security analysis does not start by cutting the world into sectors" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 168). Instead, analysis occurs with units, further described in the subsequent chapters following the securitisation process, central to any analysis.

3.3   Doing Things with Words[77]: The Securitising Speech Act

Securitisation theory allows us to trace how issues are presented as threats by elites, thus how they are securitised. For this, it is necessary to take a step back and inquire the Copenhagen's understanding of security. In the previous chapter, this was partly outlined, focusing on the broadening of the security term by the thinking school. At this point, however, the central aspect of its security concept is outlined - "security as a speech act" (Wæver 1989, p. 41). Ole Wæver developed this approach based on language theory, mainly John L. Austin, and constructivism, whereby speech constitutes reality. This process of securitisation passes various steps, starting with the actor pronouncing the existential threat and referring it to an object whose survival is at stake and has, therefore, to be protected by extraordinary measures, which becomes possible after the audience has accepted the securitising move. Through this process, a politicized issue has become a securitised one. By outlining criteria that unambiguously distinguish politicized from securitised issues, Copenhagen School is taking "seriously the traditionalists' complaint about intellectual incoherence" (Buzan et

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[77] In reference to Austin's work "How to Do Things with Words" (1975)

al. 1998, p. 4) resulting from broadening and replying to this with criteria that prevent a boundless extension of the security concept[78].

In his working paper "Security, the Speech Act" (1989), Ole Wæver presents an early draft of his securitisation approach, referring to Austin's speech act theory. Austin's theory attributes a performative, not merely descriptive meaning to statements, as they do not only describe what should be done but "do it": Thus, the "utterance is the performing of an action" (Austin 1975, p. 6). In other words, as Balzacq (2011a, p. 4) describes, speech act theory "puts the emphasis on the function of language - doing things". Austin gives marriage or naming ceremonies as examples for this constitutive power of language: By saying "I do (sc. take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)" or "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*", something is *done* (Austin 1975, p. 5). While "the uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the leading incident in the performance of the act" (Austin 1975, p. 8), certain conditions are bound to this, such as appropriate circumstances or further utterances/acts by the speaker or other persons: An authorized person has to name the ship and Christian marriage requires both participants not to be already married.

Furthermore, Austin distinguishes three types of speech acts: The locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary (Austin 1975, p. 101). The first is about the utterance itself, saying something and referring to it in a literal sense, e.g. the locution: "He said to me 'Shoot her! meaning by 'shoot' shoot and referring by 'her' to her" (Austin 1975, p. 101). The second, refers to what is done by an utterance, thus "the act performed in articulating a locution" (Balzacq 2011a, p. 4). The equivalent illocutionary example would be: "He urged (...) me to shoot her", whereas, the third, the perlocutionary act focuses on the consequential result of an utterance, the ultimate action: "He got me to (...) shoot her" (Austin 1975, p. 102). Thus, while the illocutionary act focuses on the process of invoking an action, the perlocutionary is about the "final outcome" (Wæver 1989, p. 42). Balzacq (2011, p. 5), therefore, argues that, literally, perlocution is not even a part of the speech act but merely "the causal response of a linguistic act". Thus, for Wæver (1989, p. 42) and his securitisation theory, the illocutionary act is central, being "what we could a bit simplistically call the 'pure speech

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[78] e.g. Stephen Walt, who warns of the risk to expand Security Studies "excessively" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 3).

act dimension'". How strongly securitisation is rooted in this linguistic approach becomes evident by Wæver's (1989, p. 5) definition of the security concept itself:

> "What is then security? One can view 'security' as that which, is in language theory called a speech act: it is not mainly interesting as a sign referring to something more real – it is the utterance in itself that is the act: by saying it, something is done."

Therefore, security is a concept *doing* something through its successful construction in discourse (Buzan and Hansen 2009, pp. 213–214). This discursive conception of security contrasts with the subjective and objective ones, being the three long debated epistemologies in Security Studies. The main tension has been between the latter two, subjective security, which is understood as a feeling of being secure or threatened and the objective, which is about the actual presence of security or threat. While objective security is defined in material terms, subjective security emphasises historical contexts and psychological perceptions. Both are relational: On the one hand, they contrast each other, and on the other, they are linked to each other given that subjective understanding is often built upon objective capabilities. The discursive or intersubjective conception, therefore, rejects both approaches as security is not definable in objective terms. Thus, subjective perceptions are also misleading as well because they cannot exist without objectivity. Instead, security is a speech act, through which state representatives describe a situation of urgency and the need for measures to encounter a threat. In this intersubjective process, threats become security problems and are put on top of the political agenda. (Buzan and Hansen 2009, pp. 33-34) This process is now further outlined step by step.

3.3.1 The Process of Securitisation

Ole Wæver and the Copenhagen School define security as a speech act, as security issues are not objectively given but intersubjectively created, in a process described as "securitisation" (cf. Fig. 1). To securitise is, therefore, a "*choice* (…) not an objective feature" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 208). According to the Copenhagen thought, the concept of security is socially constructed, as are threats (Lipschutz 1995b, p. 10), as there is no completely objective measure to define whether an issue "is 'really' a threat" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 30). Furthermore, even if such a measure would exist, the threshold for

what constitutes a security problem would drastically vary from country to country (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 30). Issues, therefore, do not necessarily become security issues "because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 24). This practice of presenting an issue as a threat *is* security: "'Security' is thus a self-referential practice because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 24). Therefore, "no issue is essentially a menace" (Balzacq 2011a, p. 1). The constructive perception of threats does not mean that they are purely imaginary, as Lipschutz[79] (1995b, p. 10) points out with the example of Inter-Ballistic Missiles: They have, as many threats, a real material condition and "are not mere figments of our imagination". It is however not this condition, which makes them a threat but what they *might do*: namely, what the function of targeting by "other" missiles might do to "us" (Lipschutz 1995b, p.10). Therefore, the actual threat sometimes lies in an assumed future rather than in the present. This applies also to the case study of the present paper, as further outlined in Chapter 4: What US-Presidents frightened most is not the (then-) present Iranian nuclear programme, but rather its future, potentially military, capabilities that might result from it and what they might be used for.

The first step[80] of constructing a threat puts a focus on voicing it and the role of who voices it, as "'security' *is* what actors make it" (Buzan and Wæver 2003, p. 48). The actor's crucial role in the securitisation process arises from his/her decision to handle something as a threat and perform the speech act. While theoretically, no one is excluded from being a securitising actor, and a successful securitisation is never guaranteed by an actor's role[81], the latter's position is nevertheless a crucial variable influencing the probability of a securitising speech act's success: Actors with a more privileged position are more probable to succeed (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 31–32). Copenhagen School locates most securitising actors in power holding positions, "by definition, security is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so" (Wæver 1995, p. 54). As described above in the "sector" section, governments and state

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[79] While not being part of the Copenhagen School, Lipschutz agrees with its constructivist security approach and adapts it (cf. Chapter 1 and 8 of his edited work "On Security" 1995).
[80] The "steps" are identified by the author for reasons of structuring, they are not outlined as such by the Copenhagen School and shall thus be understood more as tools for a better overview of the securitising process than strictly distinguishable categories, also given that all steps are highly intertwined.
[81] The acceptance by the audience is the crucial step therefor, as outlined below; theoretically, securitising moves can also fail when voiced by a powerful actor.

representatives are frequently securitising actors, as well as pressure groups. Securitising actors are further one of the three types of units, the Copenhagen school defines for security analysis, alongside referent objects and functional actors. First, as indicated above, securitising actors declare the referent object to be existentially threatened and thereby perform the speech act. Second, referent objects (further described below) are the threatened entity whose survival must be ensured. Third, functional actors, are neither securitising nor threatened, but affecting parts of the securitising process such as the decision-making in the field. This involves, for example, mercenaries in the military sector or polluting companies in the environmental sector. (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 36)

The second step focuses on the speech act itself and its components, most importantly existential threats and referent objects. While security is a speech act and a constructed concept, as Wæver[82] defines, it is not dependent on the word itself, thus "not defined by uttering the word *security*" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 27). Instead, the depiction of a threat requiring action and the acceptance of this discourse by the audience are the essential elements (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 27). Security can thus be conveyed both with and without naming it as "security". For (successful) securitisation the conveyed threat has to be *existential*. This is a major challenge, given that not all threats are "drastic and unprecedented", but some are merely "normal challenges" to the referent object, in Buzan's early argumentation, the state (Buzan 1991, p. 115). Existential threats are thus identified as threats as grave and urgent to threaten the referent object's survival: "Security means survival in the face of existential threats" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 27). Wæver (1995, p. 53) further argues that:

> "*Survival* might sound overly dramatic but it is, in fact, the survival of the unit *as* a
> basic political unit-a sovereign state-that is the key. Those issues with this
> undercutting potential must therefore be addressed prior to all others because, if
> they are not, the state will cease to exist as a sovereign unit and all other questions
> will become irrelevant."

Therefore, the threat to which the referent object - in this case, the state, given that security is originally linked to the sovereign nation-state (Wæver 1989, p. 4) - is exposed, is of such "particularly rapid or dramatic fashion" (Wæver 1995, p. 54) that it may extinguish the referent object. The threshold at which the RO ceases to exist,

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[82] cf. p. 80 of the present work

called the "point of no return" by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 33), has to be avoided by any means. Thus, the issue has absolute urgency and priority towards all other policies, because if there is no immediate counteraction, the threatened entity will be irreversibly lost once it has surpassed the point of no return. Despite its urgency, threats are not necessarily new when they are used in the securitising discourse: Buzan et al. (1998, pp. 27-28) distinguish *ad hoc* from *institutionalised* securitisation. The latter arises, if a "threat is persistent or recurrent" (Buzan et al. 1998, p.27), and certain issues are automatically recognised as a matter of security if they have been securitised at previous occasions: For example, the mentioning of "dikes" in the Netherlands has the implicit meaning of "security" given its recurrent use in securitisation discourse.

As implied above, the referent object is the entity, whose survival is at stake and alongside securitising and functional actors one of the three units of analysis. Balzacq (2011, p. 3) later adds the "referent subject" understanding it as the *threatening* entity, opposed to the *threatened* entity, the referent object. This term is used by some securitisation scholars in their analysis (e.g. Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard 2017). For CS, similarly to the actor, anything can be constructed as a RO. In practice, however, just as regarding actors, some variables are determining the degree of successful securitisation, namely size or scale. Neither the individual level with its too limited audience is widely successful, nor the international level lacking an "other" and having a too broad (all humankind), "subtle and indirect" RO, reducing the need for securitisation (Buzan and Wæver 2009). Instead, durable ROs are located predominantly on the middle scale, consisting of collectivities bound through a common identity, a "we" - feeling, with limited size and mostly securitising each other. (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 36–37) The difficulty of identifying a referent object as such lies further in its tendency to overlap with actors. Especially in the case of nations, it is essential to avoid such a blurring. If a nation is threatened, it is not the nation itself that acts, but some groups or (self-proclaimed) leaders who speak on its behalf - a thin but decisive difference (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 41).

While Copenhagen scholars distinguished themselves by opening the concept for various referent objects, the state/ middle level long holds a primary role in this regard. In their more recent work, however, Buzan and Wæver (2009) revised and extended this assumption by introducing the concepts of "macrosecuritisation" and "security

constellations", filling the gap between the middle and the system level of securitisation. While macrosecuritisation functions in the same steps as "normal" securitisation, it packages the securitisations from the middle and regional level "into a 'higher' and larger order", the macro-level[83] (Buzan and Wæver 2009, p. 255), on which its threats and referent objects are located. Referent objects of macrosecuritisation claim universality (in form of religions or ideologies) and they are cross-sectoral. Mutually opposed macrosecuritisations create a security constellation, located on a level above regional security complexes, possibly subsuming several. An example of a security constellation is the Cold War, with the contesting universalist ideologies Communism and Capitalism (macrosecuritisations); further examples include the Global War of Terror (whole world against terrorists) or nuclear weapons (universal threat to all humans) in (nearly) global constellations. (Buzan and Wæver 2009, pp. 257–258)

The third step, the acceptance of the audience, is crucial to make securitisation a successful one. Without this threshold to the next step, the measures, securitisation is not completed but remains a securitising move, which comprises the process outlined thus far.[84] Therefore, securitisation can never be merely imposed coercively but needs at least some degree of acceptance by the audience. The latter is mostly the public or institutions such as parliaments (e.g. vote on bills). (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25; Balzacq 2011a, p. 9) For a successful securitisation, the Copenhagen School further identifies two types of facilitating conditions that influence the audience's acceptance: an internal and an external one. The first involves linguistic aspects of the "grammar of security", while the second regards contextual aspects. The language of the securitising act involves the construction of a plot, involving the above-described threat and point of no return as well as proposing measures (described below) to encounter this, showing "a possible way out" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 33). The context regards the position of the actor, which shall be one of authority and the circumstances of the threat that become universally understood as such (e.g. water pollution, tanks).

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[83] For example, the end of the Cold War affects not only the relation between the US and USSR or Communism and Capitalism, but also e.g., the Chinese-Soviet relations; in this sense securitisation acts across levels; also, the Global War on terror blurs the middle level (US interests) with claims of threat to humanity or the "Western world" located above the middle level (p. 257).
[84] Audience acceptance and measures are described as two different steps on the ground that measures do not take place without the audience's approval; in case of a successful securitisation both steps may be viewed as one.

In the fourth step, in case the audience has been convinced, the actor can encounter the need to handle the issue immediately. By the audience's acceptance actors acquire legitimacy for the extraordinary measures they have to take to ensure the survival of the referent object. (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 28) While Buzan et al. do not deal extensively with this step in securitisation, Balzacq (2011, p. 20)[85], puts a special focus on audiences criticizing its minor explanation in CS. He defines that an audience has to possess a "direct causal connection with the issue" and is capable of enabling "the securitizing actor to adopt measures" to counter the threat (Balzacq 2011, p. 9). Furthermore, he stresses the importance to convince the audience and gain its support by appealing to its emotions and needs, thus, for successful securitisation, the actor has to adapt the speech to the audience (Balzacq 2011, p. 9). Buzan's original concept focuses more on legitimacy instead: Especially in democracies, the security issue has to be debated in the public sphere at some point to legitimize further actions (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 28). This is crucial, as the measures are taking place beyond the realm of normal politics, such as the use of force or other "special powers" (Buzan et al., p. 21). This sphere of extraordinary action bears the danger of using measures "outside the legal framework" justifying it through securitisation and the dimension of the threat (Buzan 1991, p. 370). This is mainly an issue in so-called "closed states"[86], which use "excessive securitization" on a wide range of issues, weapons and cultural aspects such as music and clothing alike (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 208). This "paranoia" has to be avoided, as it stifles democratic tendencies and economic development inwards and heightens tensions towards other states (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 208).

On the other hand, the exceptionality of the situation is the essence of security itself, as outlined by Buzan et al. (1998, p. 23):

> "'Security' is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization."

Public issues are therefore locatable on a spectrum varying from nonpoliticized issues that are not part of the public debate or dealt with by the state, to politicized - if the issue is dealt with by the government and part of public policy – and finally to

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[85] Balzacq is one of the scholars developing the "original" CS further by criticizing and re-elaborating parts of it.
[86] The examples given are "the erstwhile Soviet Union, Iran and North Korea" (p. 208); Iran can be reconsidered in this regard (note by the author).

securitised issues - requiring actions "outside the normal bounds of political procedure" (Buzan et al. 1998, pp. 23-24). Despite focusing on the securitising "direction" of the process, the scholars' credo is not "the more security the better" (Wæver 1989, p. 29). On the contrary: "Basically, security should be seen as negative, as failure to deal with issues as normal politics" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 29). Securitisation is, however, not a "one-way road": The process is possible in both directions, politicized issues can become securitised and securitised can be reversed to politicized issues. This "de-securitisation" is further outlined in the subsequent chapter.

3.3.2 De-Securitisation and Simultaneity

Although the securitising speech act is at the heart of Copenhagen's thought, Buzan et al. do not perceive securitisation as a desirable outcome. Instead, they state that "desecuritization is the optimal long-range option" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 29). For the Copenhagen School, security might be preferable over insecurity, which is defined as a security problem without any response or measure (Wæver 1995, p. 56), but contrary to the depiction of insecurity as "evil" as by traditional thought (Wæver 1989, p. 52), for the CS security shall "not be thought of (…) as always a good thing" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 4). In any case, such a thing as "complete security" is unachievable (Wæver 1995, p. 56). Alternatively, Wæver pledges "to aim for desecuritization" by "shifting the issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 4). Similarly, Buzan and Hansen (2009, p. 216) define de-securitisation as moving "an issue out of the threat-danger modality" into a logic of political compromise and debate. Therefore, de-securitisation is generally[87] not about silencing issues or bringing them into a non-politicized sphere, but rather about bringing them back on the politicized stage (Hansen 2012, p. 531). Åtland (2008, p. 292) states: "Whereas securitization can be characterized as a form of depoliticization, desecuritization usually implies some form of repoliticization". While a de-securitized issue remains part of the public debate, it is no longer seen as a threat, either because the threat is perceived as having weakened and no longer being "existential" or having disappeared completely (Åtland 2008, p. 292). Therefore, the

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[87] Hansen includes "silencing" as a form of de-securitisation as described below, however de-securitisation cannot be reduced to that, de-securitisation is not equal to silencing.

"other" has become non-threatening: "Desecuritisation requires a loosing of the friend-enemy distinction" (Hansen 2012, p. 533). Consequently, also the extraordinary measures are "no longer (…) necessary and/or justifiable" (Åtland 2008, p. 292), which, however, becomes the more challenging for de-securitising moves the more institutionalized securitisations are (Hansen 2012, p. 532).

Both securitisation and de-securitisation have been described by Wæver (1995 p. 57) in the basic CS thought, with the latter being the preferable outcome: "We do not find much work aimed at *de-securitizing* politics which, I suspect, would be more effective than securitizing problems". Nevertheless, as Wæver's quote implies, the concept of de-securitisation has long held an "underdeveloped status" in academia (Hansen 2012, p. 527). As Hansen (2012, p. 530) further indicates, this is displayed by the theory's name in itself: "The fact that we have 'securitisation theory', rather than 'desecuritisation theory', illustrates that 'securitisation' has a (seemingly) superior status". As equally derivable from the theory's name, *de*-securitisation is more intended as a supplement to securitisation instead of an equally significant part of the theory (Hansen 2012, p. 529). Further, de-securitisation "happens as a *result*[88] of speech acts, but there is not, strictly speaking, 'a' desecurity speech act": Contrary to securitisation, which is declared by the depiction of the threat, there is usually no explicit announcement of something no longer being a threat (Hansen 2012, p. 530). Hansen, who stresses the de-securitisation's importance in her paper "Reconstructing desecuritisation" (2012, p. 531), underlines that despite its supplementary role, de-securitisation has a constitutive character for securitisation: Without de-securitisation, no normal sphere of politics, from which it could be distinguished would exist. While de-securitisation is described in rather general terms as the "limitation of the use of the security speech act" (Wæver 1995, p. 60) by the first generation of CS scholars, most prominently beside the Cold War phenomenon of détente, more recently the research on the issue has increased, as outlined in the following by concentrating on Hansen's and Austin/ Beaulieu-Brossard's work.

Hansen (2012, p. 530) identifies four ideal types of political de-securitisation. First, *change through stabilisation* which was the original form of de-securitisation in the détente-context of the Cold War that involved de-securitising social and political change (Wæver 1995, p. 58), describing "a rather slow move out of an explicit security

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[88] Emphasis by the author

discourse" into engagement and mutual recognition (Hansen 2012, p. 539). In the aftermath of the Cold War, this type has greatly vanished from both politics and academia (Hansen 2012, p. 539). Second, *replacement*, by which an issue is removed from the securitising agenda and other issues are added to fill the space left by the removal of the original issue. It remains an open question, if replacement is necessarily a consequence of de-securitisation, as this is empirically frequently the case and CS has not specified if societies without securitisation exist. (Hansen 2012, p. 541) Third, *rearticulation* has become the most common form of de-securitisation in research (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard 2017, p. 306). In this case, a securitised issue is re-politicized by "offering a political solution to the threats, dangers and grievances in question" (Hansen 2012, p. 542). The friend-enemy distinction and looming conflict are overcome and "a political solution [to the issue in question] is found" (Hansen 2012, p. 543). At the centre of such de-securitisation stands the actor's realization that the "own and others' survival and interests are better served through collaboration, accommodation, and negotiation than by securitising the other side" (Hansen 2012, p. 543). A prominent example of this is provided by Åtland's (2008, p. 295) analysis of Mikhail Gorbachev's Murmansk speech at the end of the Cold War in which various de-securitising policies such as de-nuclearization, arms control, confidence-building and cooperation measures de-securitise the previously heavily securitised Arctic. In the present work, Obama's diplomatic proposals to Iran and the establishment of a nuclear deal - a political solution to the issue - is such a type of de-securitisation. Nevertheless, similar to replacement, rearticulation shows, that de-securitisation is not irreversible and may be followed by re-securitisation (Åtland 2008, p. 306). Therefore, a solution to a security issue may trigger new securitising moves (Hansen 2012, p. 543). I argue that this is the case in the present study, as Obama's de-securitisation and achievement of the Nuclear Deal led to a re-securitisation of the Iranian nuclear issue under President Trump. Thus, this type is the most significant for the present thesis. The fourth and final type of securitisation, *silencing,* involves failed securitisation or the disappearance of security issues. Contrary to the other forms of de-securitisation here the issue is not brought back to the politicized sphere but to the non-politicized. (Hansen 2012, p. 544) While de-securitisation is generally a desirable development, it is not preferable if it aims at repressing issues (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 217). Silencing can therefore be a negative or disadvantageous development,

as the issue of female soldiers in Sierra Leone shows, who, by being not securitised i.e. silenced, are denied access to rehabilitation programmes (Hansen 2012, p. 544).

Jonathan Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard (2017, p. 302) move a step further in developing the concept of de-securitisation in their paper "(De)securitisation dilemmas" by focusing on the "simultaneous enaction of securitising and desecuritising moves". While this approach challenges the "original" concept of de-securitisation in an unprecedented manner both in temporal and spatial terms, empiricism proves that simultaneity is not a new, but rather a frequent phenomenon. Simultaneous (de-) securitisation counters the derivative perception of de-securitisation inherent to the original thought, according to which de-securitisation happens *after* securitisation, deriving from it (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard 2017, p. 309). Therefore, Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard's (2017, p. 302; 309) approach overcomes both the mutual exclusivity of the two processes and their linear temporality. Instead, the scholars describe de-securitisation as a splitting of threats "into more or less securitised and desecuritised parts, more or less threatening parts, requiring more or less extraordinary measures" (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard's 2017, p. 304). This simultaneous enaction of de-securitisation "at the very moment of securitisation" is often necessary for actors who aim at reconciling conflicting interests (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard's 2017, p. 304). However, such divisions, which are mostly made externally also hold a potential of violence, as "it is never easy to divide up the world" (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard's 2017, p. 316): An example of this is Bush's after 9/11 speech in which he "split" Muslims into moderates/friends and Islamist terrorists or Obama drawing a similar line between conservative hard-liners on the one hand and reformist leaders and Iranian people on the other (p. 303). The scholars use Balzacq's concept of referent subject as a threatening entity to depict the simultaneous (de-) securitisation by dividing it into securitised and de-securitised elements. Thus, for the above-mentioned examples, the securitised element would be Islamists and Iranian hard-liners, while the de-securitised are Moderate Muslims and Reformist Iranians. The concept of simultaneity is adaptable to the present study, particularly to Obama's efforts of de-securitising the INP insofar as to achieve a treaty with Iran while simultaneously continuing securitisation as not to alienate more conservative audiences at home and in Israel (cf. chapter 5).

3.4 Concretising Security Analysis

The present chapter has dealt extensively with the theoretical framework used for the case study. Briefly overviewing the genesis of Security Studies, the chapter has presented the Copenhagen School's thought that challenged traditional approaches by expanding the concept of security. Extending the security sectors beyond the military and introducing new constructs such as security complexes, Buzan et al. defined a new framework of analysis. The most relevant theoretical strand for the discourse analysis of the present thesis is securitisation theory, introduced by Wæver based on speech act theory and a constructivist understanding of security. Describing the process by which security is intersubjectively created, Wæver outlined how an issue is securitised by an actor by naming it as an existential threat to the referent object and voicing the need for extraordinary measures. The second generation of Copenhagen Scholars further elaborated the theory, mostly focusing on de-securitisation by which an issue is brought back into the arena of normal politics. Therefore, the theoretical elaboration on the thought is manifold. But how does security analysis work and what is the methodological approach by which this theory is applied to case studies?

Balzacq (2011b, p. 31) argues that despite securitisation being "essentially an empirical question, (…) there has been little discussion on methods". In "Framework of analysis", Buzan et al. (1998) remain predominantly on a theoretical level, and while they give indications on the sequence of applying it to case studies, they do not develop a methodological agenda. Balzacq (2011, p. 38) heavily criticises this negligence of method amongst securitisation scholars and IR more generally by calling it an "overriding myth in IR that students come to methods intuitively and as such methods do not deserve absorbing part of our research time". Thus, Balzacq pledges for understanding methods as a substantial part of empirical analysis. To counter this widespread view, the next chapter focuses extensively on the appropriate methodology for the present project and how it has been chosen. At this point, however, the (few) analysis suggestions of Buzan et al. are subsumed to bridge the two chapters.

As noted below 3.2.2, security analysis does not start by viewing each sector separately, and while a sector-by-sector analysis is also possible, Buzan et al. focus on the cross-sectoral approach. Cross-sectoral analysis equates to the actor's view on security problems, as actors, especially states, are mostly judging security problems

"across the board" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 168). The sequence suggested by Copenhagen Scholars for analysis is the following: First, securitisation must be identified as a phenomenon, second, the units, the referent object and securitising actors, and third, the references between the units, the security complexes (Buzan et al. 1998, p.169). While the security complexes are redundant for the present study, the RO and the actors are highly relevant. Therefore, it is worth noting what scholars display regarding the referent object: One RO (e.g. France) may have various forms (e.g. France as state, nation and Europe) that have to be analysed (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 172). This becomes also visible in the research project by Trump's referring to both Israel and the Jewish nation as a referent object (cf. 5.2.2). In their example, a cross-sectoral analysis of EU security policy, Buzan et al. (1998, p. 176-177) proceed as follows: Initially, by choosing the units, the EU and members of its institutions, as RO and actor; then the method, for which they suggest discourse analysis, and finally, the material, which consists of texts by the European Commission and Parliament. The outcome of the analysis is focused on different themes of securitisations in the discourse. However, methodology falls short in their description: While the CS scholars state to choose discourse analysis as a method, they apply it in a rather simplistic fashion without profound explanation: "The technique is simple: Read, looking for arguments that take the rhetorical and logical form defined here as security" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 177). The present thesis, however, aims at using a more sophisticated methodology, outlined in the following chapter, arguing with Balzacq's notion (2011b, p. 38) that "no research can attend to substantive questions only through gut feeling".

4. Breaking the Rhetoric Up: Methodological Approach

While securitisation theory provides a detailed theoretical framework of analysis, methodologically the approach remains rather rudimentary. In line with Balzacq's (2011) calls for increased use of method instead of mere intuition in IR, a two-layered methodology to analyse the US-President's speeches was used, namely discourse and content analysis. This chapter aims at introducing both approaches of data analysis and their application to the case study described alongside the process of data selection. But on which grounds have the two methods been chosen?

First, discourse analysis is a rather logical choice given the linguistic dimension of securitisation theory and the kind of analysed material: speeches. The Copenhagen scholars themselves suggest this method for security analysis: "The way to study securitisation is to study discourse" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25). The urgency of the threat and the introduction of extraordinary measures must be conveyed by articulating the arguments with a "particular rhetorical and semiotic structure" to achieve the desired outcome: the audience's acceptance (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 25). Beyond the linguistic dimension, discourse analysis shares the constructive notion of reality with the Copenhagen School: There is no objective reality, merely a construction of a such through social interaction (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 351). The goal of the analysis is to deconstruct the apparent reality of the discourse by exposing the purpose of its use and the structures of might[89] linked to it (Behnke et al., p. 352). Balzacq (2011, p. 38) identifies other methods alongside discourse analysis for studying securitisation, amongst them content analysis. Furthermore, he states that the methods for studying discourse can (but do not have to) be combined.

Second, qualitative content analysis is used in the present work. This may be - to use Balzacq's (2011, p. 50) words - an "exceptional" but fruitful combination. The need for a second method arises from discourse analysis itself, as it does not provide its own "technique" for analysis (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 252). Content analysis is used to elaborate a vast amount of "communication material" systematically and including its context, such as the political background and purpose of communication (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 354; Mayring 1994, p. 159). While Mayring defines diverse types of qualitative content analysis, the creation of categories is central to any. Categories are

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[89] The German word "Macht" is used in the original text, which is intended as "force" or "domination", rather than mere "power".

classifications to which parts of the text are assigned; a process called "coding" (Mayring 1994, p. 162). So, the most relevant information or argument can be extracted from the text and grouped systematically; a process conducted inductively from the material and/or deductively from theory (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 359). In the present evaluation, the categories derive from securitisation theory and the coding proceeds via QDA software. Finally, the chapter describes how the speeches of Obama and Trump are selected from the US-Government's Publishing Office and how the coding frame is established to analyse the securitising discourse of the Presidents.

4.1   Beyond the Spoken: The Concept of Discourse

Copenhagen School outlines discourse analysis as the "obvious method" for studying securitisation, given that security is defined by "a specific rhetorical structure that has to be located in discourse" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 176). However, the scholars do not define any "sophisticated" analytical tools but suggest studying discourse "as a subject in its own right" (Buzan et al. 1998, p. 176). Thereby they follow the rather neglecting stance of IR scholars towards methodology, as criticized by Balzacq (2011, p. 38). Aiming at an augmented methodological accuracy, the present paper goes beyond Buzan et al.'s (1998, p. 177) vague technique of simply reading and looking for rhetorical structures outlining securitisation (cf. p. 88 this paper), introducing the essence of discourse analysis. This is a rather complex task as discourse analysis is an overly broad concept, lacking a universal definition or method (Balzacq 2011, p. 39). Instead, the concept is shaped by various approaches and continuous debates: "(…) there is no single 'discourse analysis', but many different styles of analysis that all lay claim to the name" (Gill 2000, p. 172). Gill further counts "at least 57 variants of discourse analysis" (p. 173). Nevertheless, there are central features that are common to all variants: the centrality of language and its constructivist power, the use of text as data, the relevance of context and the critical approach of the scholar towards the material.

Similar to the Copenhagen School, which rejected the traditionalist realist approach, discourse analysis criticized the realist perception of language for merely being descriptive and adapts a constructivist worldview instead. Gill (2000, p. 173) defines constructivism as taking knowledge not as something granted and one's own views

not as necessarily true, as worldviews and knowledge are based on social, historic and cultural construction, whereby knowledge or constructions are inextricably related to actions. This is exactly how CS defines security: it is established by defining it as such. Therefore, securitisation theory matches with this method: Discourse analysis attributes constructivist power to language as "texts of various kinds *construct* our world" (Gill 2000, p. 175) and states that objective truth is non-existent (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 352). Securitisation scholars use the approach to "map the emergence and evolution of patterns (…) constitutive of a threat image" (Balzacq 2011, p. 39).

"Text" is hereby not limited to a written or spoken sense (as in the present case study), but may also involve symbols, images or music, shortly everything with the "capacity to convey meaning" (Balzacq 2011, p. 39). Texts, or discourse, "do not operate in a vacuum" but are narrowly linked to context (Balzacq 2011, p. 36). Similarly, Wodak (2015, pp. 2–3) argues that discourse needs to be analysed not merely through the text itself but also by the social process contributing to its creation and the "historical subjects" (individuals or groups) creating "meaning" by interacting with it. Similar to Balzacq (2011, p. 36) who calls for securitisation scholars to contextualise discourse socially and historically since threats are always arising from contexts, Wodak stresses that discourse is "situated in time and space" and therefore "historically produced and interpreted" (2015, p. 3). Discourse is interrelated with its social context and varying from the perspective on it, dependent upon whether it is interpreted differently (Gill 2000, p. 175). Discourse is, therefore, always "occasioned" within a specific context and does not aim at generalizations or the identification of universal processes (Gill 2000, p. 186). In line with these arguments, the first part of the present work puts a strong focus on the establishment of the Iranian nuclear programme and its consequences on the US-Iranian relationship, as this contextualisation is crucial to understand the discourse of Obama and Trump and their threat images.

Beyond creating reality, discourse is also a social practice, constituting action: "People use discourse to *do* things" (Gill 2000, p. 175). As a social phenomenon, language always conveys values and meaning if voiced by individuals, groups or institutions, also if seemingly neutral actors such as media are involved; the perception of those voicing is always reflected in their discourse. Furthermore, the recipients of the discourse (readers/hearers) are not merely passive, similarly to CS's audience. (Wodak 2015, p. 6) The voicing of discourse is especially powerful when used by the

elites for ideological reasons (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 352). One of the analysis's strands, Critical Discourse Analysis, focuses on this "relation between language and power" (Wodak 2015, p. 2), especially the dominance, control, discrimination and unequal power relations mediated by language. According to CDA, language is not powerful on its own but becomes so if used by those in power, resulting in inequality and suffering. While language is not derivative of power, it "indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power" (Wodak 2015, p. 11) and further may enable the subversion or alternation of power. Power itself is understood "as a central condition in social life" (Wodak 2015, p. 11). Similarly, inequality is also voiced and legitimized by the use of language, making it a "medium of domination and social force" (Wodak 2015, p. 2). Ideology is thereby used to legitimize the dominance of those in power. The struggle between different ideologies and discourses is a central feature reflected in texts and therefore hardly the product of merely one person. (Wodak 2015, pp. 3–11) Gill (2000, p. 176) formulates it as the discourse frequently being "involved in establishing one version in the face of competing versions". This is also visible in the present study: While the speeches are held by the presidents, they nevertheless contain various discourses. For example, Obama had to construct the INP as much as a threat to satisfy conservative audiences but also to de-securitise the issue to keep negotiations with Iran going. Regarding the aspect of dominance, the securitisation of the INP can be read as the US maintaining control as a world power and nuclear power, not allowing the challenge of a potential nuclear weapons power in a region crucial for its interest.

For discourse analysis, especially CDA, the main goal consists of critically enquiring these processes of power by not merely describing discourses but aiming at their deconstruction. In this context, the "critical" refers to the position of the scholar during analysis, who has to distance oneself from the data and practice self-reflection on its position (Wodak 2015, p. 9). Also, Gill (2000, p. 178-179) suggests questioning one's own assumptions during the analysis. As a tool for analysis, she proposes coding, whereby categories are established depending on the research interest. This leads to the content analysis and coding process used as the main method in the present study, described in the subsequent section.

4.2   Tracing the Core: Content Analysis and Data Selection

While discourse analysis is based on a constructivist understanding of science, content analysis takes a somewhat positivist approach. Nevertheless, both methods are combinable in security analysis, as Balzacq (2011, p. 51) describes: They share the same type of datasets - texts - for gaining conclusions in analysis. The primary point of discrepancy regards the perception of the texts as constructed (discourse analysis) versus having a fixed, constant meaning (content analysis). The present work tries to avoid this dilemma by using content analysis merely to filter the securitisation out of the presidential discourse. As the main task of content analysis and its coding tool is the extraction of relevant information from a text, it is appropriate for the present project's speech analysis: The speeches do not exclusively contain securitising elements and are in part not exclusively about the Iranian nuclear programme. Therefore, securitising moves have to be filtered from the material and ordered to identify how the presidents construct threats, referent objects and necessary measures. *How they construct* - therefore, the constructivist approach of discourse analysis is used to evaluate the results and not taking the statements about units (e.g. threats) as something fixed or true. Content analysis is merely used as a means to an end, to filter information, while the outcome is critically questioned and interpreted as a construct by the actor in the sense of discourse analysis. Balzacq (2011) confirms that qualitative data analysis is useful for identifying securitisation frames.

The qualitative content analysis, which was originally developed by Philipp Mayring from its quantitative counterpart, was also used. Mayring aimed to develop a tool for systematic text analysis and interpretation while maintaining the aspect of strict academic rule guidance inherent to the quantitative content analysis (Mayring 2015, p. 50). Therefore, he set out a vast framework of methodological elements and variations, as content analysis is no "standard instrument" but is adaptable to the research question (Mayring 2015, p. 51). Besides rule strictness, the communication background plays a significant role for content analysis, as the material is always interpreted within a context including aspects such as the communicator's intentions or the socio-political circumstances of the communication material (Mayring 1994, p. 159). Content analysis is an evaluation method; the data must have already been

collected[90]. Choosing the type of data, the sampling unit (e.g. collection of presidential speeches) is, therefore, the first step, alongside narrowing it down to specific units of analysis (e.g. a selection of presidential speeches). (Mayring 2015, p. 55; Kuckartz 2018, p. 30)

While Mayring distinguishes the summarizing, the explicating and the structuring content analysis, he defines categories as a central feature to all. Categories are essential to systematic text analysis, as relevant parts of the text are assigned to each category, a process called "coding" (Mayring 1994, p. 162) or "cut and file" as the text is torn apart and re-ordered according to its meaning (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 360). Therefore, the name of a category summarizes the meaning of the assigned text pieces. Beyond the coding process, the three basic types of qualitative content analysis, differ in their aim and sequence according to Mayring. However, their tools are not mutually exclusive given that the "mix of methods" is a prominent feature of content analysis (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 354). Briefly explained, the summarizing content analysis aims at reducing the data to specific crucial information using an inductively established coding frame; the explicating uses additional contextual material to interpret the meaning of the coded unit; the structuring focuses on classifying the text along certain characteristics using a deductive approach. (Mayring 1994, p. 170, 2015, pp. 67–68) Given that the aim of the present work is both to reduce the selected speeches to the securitising moves and to structure these into the various elements of the securitisation process, using both inductive and deductive tools of code framing, the analysis presents a mix of the summarizing and structuring content analysis.

What Mayring (2015) calls "category", other scholars describe as "codes". Thus, Kuckartz (2018) notes a confusion of both terminologies, which are being frequently used synonymously - as by himself. However, he points out, that in English "code" is more frequently used than "category" (Kuckartz, 2018, p. 36). Categories or codes may have a hierarchic character and consist of main and subcategories, with the latter being subsumed by the former (e.g. Referent object: Israel, US, ME) (Kuckartz 2018, p. 38). The software used in this project, however, labels the main categories "category" and the subcategories "codes". This is also how the terms are used in the present work, as

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[90] In contrast to data collection methods such as surveys or interviews.

literature confirms the synonymous character of both. Also, this will point out the distinct levels (main and sub) and types of creation: deductive and inductive.

Coding, the filtering of relevant information out of the text, can happen deductively or inductively, but as in the present work, *de facto* a mix of both is the most common (Behnke et al. 2010, p. 363). The deductive or theoretical coding uses concepts or keywords of a theory or the scholar's experience from previous projects; the categories are therefore established before elaborating the material, for which reason the process is also named *a priori* coding (Kuckartz 2018, pp. 64–65; Behnke et al. 2010, p. 362). On the other hand, inductive or "open" coding operates in working progress, the categories are established by coding the text, requiring nevertheless pre-knowledge and skill (Kuckartz 2018, p. 72). Mayring (2015, p. 87) suggests revising this coding process after the first round by re-checking the number of categories/codes (e.g. eliminating redundant ones) and/or editing their name. In the empirical part of the thesis, the categories (main codes) are developed deductively from securitisation theory (e.g. RO), whereas the codes (subcategories) are inductively developed on the text (e.g. Israel below RO). The length of codes can vary from few words to a sentence or paragraph. While different pieces of text are usually assigned to one code or category, one piece of text may also be assigned to multiple categories. (Behnke et al. 2010, pp. 361–362)

There are diverse types of codes that aim at highlighting distinct aspects of the data. Saldaña (2016) describes a variety of coding methods, which can be combined in the analysis. In the present project, some of them are used in their basic form. First, descriptive coding, which aims at summarizing the topic of a text part, commonly using nouns (Saldaña 2016, p. 88), is used for most codes to summarize what the steps of securitisation are about, e.g. sanctions as an extraordinary measure. Second, most of these codes are simultaneously *in vivo* codes, which means they are taken from the text verbatim and aim at prioritizing the speaker's words (Saldaña 2016, p. 91). As in securitisation, the words determine e.g. the threat, it is crucial to stay as close as possible to the actor's words to rightfully interpret his speech. Therefore, e.g. the nuclear arms race is coded as such as well as terrorist access to NW. Here it is relevant to use "terrorist" to display the degree of danger perceived by the actor (while

simultaneously being aware of the constructiveness of the term).[91] Third, the basic idea of "versus coding" is applied, too: This coding describes dichotomies regarding individuals, processes etc., displaying conflict or competition (Saldaña 2016, p. 115-116). The binarity is inherent to securitisation itself: it is about "us", the threatened, versus "them", the threatening. In a possibly wide interpretation of the original, the codes below referent object vs. threat are displaying some conflicting nature. Thus, this is the methodological approach, which is now adapted to the case study, first by describing it and then empirically through the study in the following chapter.

How have the speeches of both Presidents been chosen and how was the methodology adapted to the case study? Various official sources make the presidential speeches available to the public online: The Official Homepage of the White House (2020) displays those of the current president[92], the White House Archives (2020) those of the former Presidents, while the Miller Centre (2020) and the U.S. Government Publishing Office (2021) collect speeches by all US-Presidents. In the present work, speeches from the Publishing Office are analysed. As an archive of state documents, such as bills, laws or congressional hearings, the website contains the broadest collection of presidential documents among those mentioned[93]. Furthermore, it possesses a highly accurate search and filter system with numerous variables (e.g. date, keywords, person, types of speeches) leading to precise results. To choose the speeches of President Obama and Trump, the "Advanced Search" on the website was used: First, on "data range" the option "date is after" was chosen to be January 20th, 2009, when Barack Obama was inaugurated. The "date is after"-search tool applies until the day of the search; therefore, the Website was last checked on January 20th, 2021, when Donald Trump left office. Second, the "Compilation of Presidential Documents" was chosen as the Collection to search through, and third, the keywords "Iran" and "nuclear" were inserted as criteria that each speech should contain in its "Full-Text". This refined the search on speeches about the Iranian nuclear issue, not merely Iranian or nuclear issues as a single term would have led to. "Nuclear" was intentionally left as a single word, as the presidents were expected to talk not only

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[91] As many codes consist of one word being e.g. a country, it is somewhat logical to use it verbatim, so it may be overstated to speak of *in vivo* coding.
[92] Donald Trump at this point of the work.
[93] Speeches on both the White House and the Miller Center homepage have been checked to gain this conclusion.

about the nuclear "programme" and so the exclusion of speeches talking about nuclear "ambitions", the nuclear "deal" or the potential nuclear "weapons" was prevented.

Given the limits of the current project and the vast number of speeches, further selective criteria were applied on the search results using "refine your search" tools: First, the speeches should be held by the two presidents personally - namely "Obama, Barack H." and "Trump, Donald J." under the "Presidents" filter -, speeches by other members of the administration (e.g. Secretaries of State or the Press Secretary) were excluded. Second, only certain types of speeches were included, namely "Addresses and Remarks", "Meetings with Foreign Leaders and International Officials", "Interviews With the News Media" and in case of Trump also "Statements by the President"[94]. The other options, "Supplementary Materials" and "Joint Statements", were excluded as neither contain speeches, but rather diverse texts such as checklists and written statements of bi- or multilateral meetings. The category "Interviews With the News Media" is somewhat misleading as it contains distinct types of speeches: remarks, news conferences, and interviews with cable networks. The latter were excluded on the same ground as Q&A sessions, which frequently followed the speeches[95]: While undoubtedly in line with their respective policy, these were spontaneous and often repetitive answers by the presidents. Thus, the focus was set on prepared speeches, that (intentionally) aimed at securitising. More importantly, it would have been difficult to draw a boundary on which interviews to include/ exclude; involving all comments of the presidents made towards media during their presidency would have gone beyond the scope (and available space) of the present paper. Addresses, remarks, statements and press conferences were thus chosen as the most relevant speech types. Third, the speeches were refined based on their amount of relevant content. To include merely those dealing exclusively with the issue would have been a too narrow choice, therefore the criteria were set on at least one relevant paragraph per speech. The presidents frequently mentioned the Iranian issue in one sentence, mostly to give an example of a policy line or mentioning it as a topic discussed with another state representative. In these cases, the speech was redundant, as the mentioning of the topic did not occur in a securitising manner. This also applied to cases that contained

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[94] For Obama, this option was not given; the "meetings with foreign leaders" contained mostly remarks.

[95] Merely the speech given by the president was included into the analysis, not following questions from and replies to the journalists.

one sentence about denying Iran access to NW, being the only one to refer to Iran. In some rare cases where Iran's nuclear issue was mentioned in only one sentence but gave relevant additional information on securitisation, such as a specific referent object, however, the speech was included in the analysis.

These criteria aim at refining the search by including the range of securitising elements and excluding redundant information. Since the scope of the analysis is qualitative in nature, the denial of Iranian NWs by the Presidents is important. Quantitative aspects such as the frequency of the voiced opinion, are therefore negligible and do not impede the validity of the research. After applying these criteria to the search function, a total of 86 speeches, 55 by Obama and 31 by Trump, are analysed. For further analysis, the downloaded speeches were imported chronologically into the QDA software, using two separate projects - one for each president, as their coding structure slightly differs. The coding structure was established in the next step on the theoretical grounds of the Copenhagen School's securitisation theory. Thereby, the categories are established deductively, using the main steps of the securitisation theory described by Buzan et al.: The existential threat, the referent object, the targeted audience and the intended extraordinary measures. Furthermore, the point of no return is included as it exemplifies the US' perception of the programme, weaponization. Finally, also de-securitisation is one category (cf. 5.1.6. and 5.2.6).

For the coding process, a specific QDA software is advantageous, as it simplifies the coding process, especially revision, as codes can be eliminated, edited or merged at any time. Also, a better overview is given, as the coding frame, the text and its coded parts are visible simultaneously. Finally, the coding retrieval tool is helpful for the evaluation of the results, as all coded text pieces are shown beside their category. (Mayring 1994, p. 174; 2015, p. 118) In the present programme, the QDA Miner software is used[96]. Utilizing the QDA Miner programme, the codes are assigned to each category inductively during the coding process (e.g. the US, Israel and NPT below referent object). Each code is coloured differently for overview reasons, both during the process and in the retrieval section. Therefore, the material is coded in two cycles to allow a modification after the first and verifying the changes during the second. Finally, the coded segments are retrieved by using the commands "Retrieve" ->

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[96] This software was chosen due to previous research experience of the author; Saldaña (2016, p. 29) also recommends it amongst others.

"Coding retrieval" -> selection of a code -> "Search" in the QDA software. This displays all coded text segments per code and category. Using this tool, the results of the analysis are described in the following chapter. While the analysis is qualitative, quantitative aspects are used for generalizing statements and displayed by the graphs in the appendix.

5. Gaining Knowledge: The Empirical Analysis

"We can expose the unnecessary nature of the securitization but not its falsity."
(Buzan et al. 1998, p. 206)

In the present chapter, the results of the empirical analysis are presented: The (de-) securitising discourse of President Obama and President Trump is outlined by describing categories and codes used in the QDA process. The categories are based on the steps of securitisation and the same in both presidents' discourses: existential threat, RO, point of no return, audience and extraordinary measures. Also, both have a "de-securitisation"-category. The codes, however, differ slightly, as they are inductively created (cf. Fig. 2 and 3). The discourse is described using the coded text segments and is summarized by reflections on each president's main emphasis. Concluding the chapter, a comparison between both discourses is outlined, focusing on similarities, differences and the chronology of the (de-)securitising pattern.

This analysis aims at deconstructing the presidential discourse and exposing the frequent redundancy of securitisation. As Buzan et al. (1998, p. 206) indicate, the discourse is neither "wrong" nor is it the aim of analysis to judge its rightfulness. Nevertheless, de-securitisation may be more desirable, as shown in the study: Obama presents a de-securitising option to the issue and the JCPOA proves the effectiveness of such an approach. On the other hand, this curbed renewed securitisation under Trump. These conclusions are drawn without judgement - the critical distance in the analysis is thus crucial to trace the core of the discourse. It should be noted that the single steps of securitisation are intertwined and cannot be fully separated. One sentence may contain multiple codes, for example: outlining both existential threat and point of no return. Therefore, the following analysis aims at a structured overview, allowing to grasp the single steps of securitisation and retrieve the presidents' focuses. Similarly, to the text fragments themselves, the categories shall not be viewed as isolated pieces of information that are strictly classifiable. Instead, they are contextualised in the discourse, which leads to another remark that must be anticipated to the analysis. The coding occurred not merely looking at the meaning of the chosen sentence itself but is implied by the context: The US presidents do not exclusively securitise the nuclear programme, but frequently securitise other issues linked to Iran such as its regime's human rights abuses, its Ballistic Missiles Programme or its

sponsoring of groups dubbed as terrorist organisations by the US. As the present work focuses exclusively on the nuclear issue, these aspects are only included in the analysis, if they are causally linked to it, e.g. if the president states that Iran cannot be allowed a NW given its sponsorship of terrorism. At this point, the analysis of the presidential speeches follows.

5.1 The President's Rhetoric: Barack H. Obama (2009-2016)

5.1.1 Existential Threat

The first threats identified in Obama's rhetoric are the Iranian nuclear programme itself and its potential weaponization path. Similarly to his predecessors, Obama is convinced that "Iran (…) is pursuing nuclear weapons" (9/20/2012)[97], as he points out: "Among U.S. policymakers, there's never been disagreement on the danger posed by an Iranian nuclear bomb" (8/5/2015). Thus, in his discourse, the securitisation of the programme is inextricably linked to the securitisation of Iranian nuclear weapons, though Iran has not (yet) achieved such. This conviction stems from Iran's inability to "demonstrate the peaceful intentions of its nuclear program" (9/23/2010) and is reinforced by the revelation of the concealed uranium enrichment facility at Qom during Obama's early presidency (9/26/2009, 6/9/2010). President Obama uses this example as proof of Iran's weaponization intentions: "(…) the size and configuration of this facility is inconsistent with a peaceful programme. Iran is breaking rules that all nations must follow (…)" (9/25/2009). This non-compliance with international agreements and organizations delegitimizes the programme itself, which resulted in Obama calling it "illicit" on multiple occasions (9/17/2009, 5/22/2011). For the president, the nature of the Iranian programme is an issue of "grave concern" (12/16/2011) as "a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained" (9/25/2012). This threat is urgent[98] (9/26/2009), and "one of the greatest threats to our security" (4/2/2015), being existential especially for Israel (3/21/2013). In the final years of the presidency, Obama focuses primarily on the containment of this threat by peaceful means through the JCPOA (4/2/2015).

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[97] The speeches are cited by using the American date (9/20/2012 is thus the 20th of September 2012). Further, for reasons of fluency, merely the date, not the President's name is included in the citation.
[98] In the speech, Obama describes the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programmes as "the urgent threats of our time" (9/26/2009).

The Iranian non-compliance with the rules of the international community is the second threat, which is intricately linked to its potentially weaponized nuclear programme. While the first code refers directly to the danger of the programme and NWs, this code subsumes more general statements regarding the threat of Iranian non-compliance: "Iran also poses a serious challenge through its failure to live up to international obligations" (7/6/2009). Concretely, the ignoring of such obligations and the "violations of international rules and norms" (5/19/2012) refer to the NPT, the IAEA and the UNSCR (9/25/2009, 6/9/2010). Obama stresses the repetitive character of Iran's unwillingness to comply: "And time and again, the Iranian Government has failed to meet those responsibilities" (6/9/2010)[99] and is "taking the path of denial, deceit, and deception" instead (3/26/2012). According to Obama, such non-compliance involves especially the failure to prove the peacefulness of its programme (9/21/2011), being "the only member of the NPT" to do so (3/26/2012) and the failure of "revealing all nuclear-related activities", as the facility at Qom proves (9/25/2009). This behaviour cannot be tolerated, as a state like Iran[100] shall not be allowed to "game the system" (12/10/2009).

The third threat identified in Obama's presidential discourse regards "a potential nuclear arms race" (4/5/2009). Despite this threat not yet being present, it is frequently used to display the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran and the need to encounter it: "We do not want to see a nuclear arms race in one of the most volatile regions in the world" (3/5/2012)[101]. Due to its looming conflicts, the Middle East cannot afford "a race for an even-more powerful tool of destruction" (4/6/2009) and nuclear proliferation or even war would therefore not merely lead the region but "the world down a hugely dangerous path" (6/4/2009). Therefore, this code is inextricably linked to the RO Middle East, and partly to the world.

The fourth danger of achieving nuclear weapons as a Middle Eastern country is the threat of terrorist access to this weaponry: "A nuclear armed Iran would raise the risk of nuclear terrorism" (3/21/2013). Furthermore, Obama concretises that terrorist organisations might gain access to Iranian nuclear weapons. The groups, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah, are Iranian proxies that have carried out terrorist attacks and would be strengthened by a nuclear Iran, posing "an unacceptable risk to Israel"

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[99] also 1/27/2010, 4/8/2010
[100] Also in this case "nations like" is referring to both North Korea and Iran.
[101] also 9/20/2012, 8/5/2015

(8/5/2015; 3/4/2012). Finally, President Obama links the Iranian regime directly to these terrorists: "And we do not want a regime that has been a state sponsor of terrorism being able to feel that it can act even more aggressively or with impunity as a consequence of its nuclear power" (3/5/2012).

The final example describes the nature of the Iranian regime as a threat, which shall not be augmented by NWs. This code is, however, linked to other topics besides the nuclear programme:

> "Because whether it is threatening the nuclear nonproliferation regime or the human rights of its own citizens or the stability of its own neighbors by supporting terrorism, the Iranian Government continues to demonstrate that its own unjust actions are a threat to justice everywhere" (6/9/2010).

Due to its behaviour in other policy fields, an Iranian NW has to be prevented. An interesting aspect of the discourse is that Obama applies a desecuritising move on Iranian people by not equating them to the threatening regime, but displaying them as a RO of it: "It[102] would embolden a regime that has brutalized its own people" (3/4/2012). Again, this is primarily an existential threat to the US ally Israel, as the Iranian regime "denies the Holocaust, threatens to wipe Israel off the map, and sponsors terrorist groups committed to Israel's destruction" (3/4/2012), for which Iran has to be prevented from gaining NW by any means (4/23/2012).

5.1.2 Referent Object

As the first referent object, Obama identifies the non-proliferation regime, which is existentially threatened by Iranian non-compliance and its weaponization ambitions: "A nuclear-armed Iran would thoroughly undermine the nonproliferation regime that we've done so much to build" (3/4/2012). Concretely, the threatened entities are the NPT and its verification regime: "For years, the Iranian government has failed to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has violated its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency" (6/9/2010). As outlined above, this involves the secrecy around nuclear activities and the exceeding of limits to ensure the peaceful nature of the programme (9/26/2009). Obama is committed "to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and pursue the peace and security of a world without them"

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[102] Nuclear weaponry (note by the author)

(9/24/2014), and thus, perceives the Iranian nuclear programme as "one of the greatest tests of that regime[103]" (4/1/2016) that may "cause enormous problems to the nonproliferation regime worldwide" (9/23/2009).

While the first RO regards international treaties, organisations and norms, the second RO stressed by Obama regards the international community itself (3/20/2014, 5/14/2015), as the programme "is a danger for the entire world" (3/21/2013). This referent object is defined very broadly, as an Iranian "weaponization of nuclear power" does not merely concern some states but "is something of grave concern to all of us" (5/19/2012). Furthermore, Obama uses the terms "global security" (7/6/2009), "international security" (7/15/2015), world peace (3/4/2012), "our collective security" (4/8/2010) and "our world" (4/2/2015, 4/4/2015) to highlight that these entities are threatened by a nuclear Iran, hinting that he refers to the international community not merely as a system of states but humankind itself. This is reinforced by the use of the possessive pronoun "our" which implies that the international community is standing united "to meet a common threat" (7/21/2015). Twice Obama concretises the "we" somewhat: All nations advocating for peace are endangered and shall not be indifferent towards Iran's actions (12/10/2009), and also "the stability of the global economy" is threatened by an Iranian NW (9/25/2012). During his second term, Obama depicts the world less as a RO but focuses on the only possibility to protect it, namely by enforcing the JCPOA: "And if this deal is fully implemented, the prohibition on nuclear weapons is strengthened, a potential war is averted, our world is safer" (9/28/2015).

The Middle East is the third referent object described by Obama. The region is in "real danger" given Iran's behaviour (9/10/2015), especially the potential threat of a nuclear arms race, being "the world's most unstable region" (8/5/2015). "This part of the world has known enough violence. It has known enough hatred", describes Obama, referring to the potential for conflict in the Middle East (4/6/2009), pointing out that the possession of a NW would be "threatening the stability and security of the region" (9/25/2009), turning "every crisis into a potential nuclear showdown" (8/5/2015). A weaponized Iranian nuclear programme would not merely pose a threat to neighbouring countries on the Gulf (9/25/2012), but also Iran and its population itself: "The Iranian Government must understand that true security will not come through the

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[103] The non-proliferation regime (note by the author)

pursuit of nuclear weapons" (6/9/2010), and this non-compliance is "denying its own people access to the opportunity they deserve" (9/25/2009).

For the fourth RO, Israel, Obama uses highly securitised language, portraying the Iranian nuclear ambitions as the primary threat to Israel, especially given the anti-Israeli stance of the Iranian regime: "When faced with a regime that threatens global security and denies the Holocaust and threatens to destroy Israel, the United States will do everything in our power to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon" (4/23/2012). Thus, he assesses that "a nuclear-armed Iran is completely counter to Israel's security interests" (3/4/2012) as it "would threaten the elimination of Israel" (9/25/2012). Therefore, Obama describes the Iranian nuclear programme as existentially threatening Israel (3/20/2013, 3/21/2013).

Finally, Obama describes the fifth RO, the most expected, but not most frequent: the United States. He depicts the Iranian nuclear programme as a threat to the United States' security (12/16/2011) and those of its allies: "And we will safeguard America's own security against those who threaten our citizen, our friends, and our interests. Look at Iran" (1/24/2012). The Iranian nuclear programme is frequently portrayed simultaneously as a national and international security issue in Obama's discourse, as he emphasises: "Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon would not only be (…) a threat to the United States but would be profoundly destabilizing in the international community as a whole" (5/18/2009). Furthermore, Obama uses the US primarily as a RO to advocate for engagement: "For the sake of our national security, we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed" (1/28/2014), and the JCPOA: "This deal will make America and the world safer and more secure" (7/18/2015). Thus, in these cases, the securitisation happens mostly by stating that hindering Iran to gain NWs would secure the US.

5.1.3 Point of No Return

The discourse outlined thus far has already hinted at the point of no return, which must be avoided by any means: "Iran must not get a nuclear weapon" (3/21/2013). As a member of the NPT, "Iran will never be permitted to develop a nuclear weapon" (4/4/2015) and also due to the nature of the Iranian regime, the US is not going to tolerate a weaponization of its nuclear programme (1/19/2012). The avoidance of this point of no return has absolute priority for Obama: "I've said since before I became

President that one of my primary goals in foreign policy would be preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons" (3/3/2015), given the existential consequences for the ROs outlined above. The point of no return is marked as Iran being a NWS, but a closer look at the discourse shows that Obama also outlines the weaponization *capacity* as such a point, as he demands to block "every single one of Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon – every single path"[104] (5/22/2015). Despite his engagement policy, Obama remains committed to the goal of preventing an Iranian NW throughout his presidency (2/11/2014, 7/16/2014).

5.1.4 Audience

The audience is relatively difficult to capture by coding in the presidential discourse, as it is frequently not addressed directly. It is dependent on the occasion of the speech, e.g. joint statements with other state representatives aim at the respective domestic audiences. For example, as discussed in the conclusion, increased securitisation may correlate with addressing Israeli audiences. This is, however, an interpretation of the rhetoric, and Israeli audiences did not directly influence any measures. Therefore, this category deals merely with the Iranian and US audiences directly addressed and linked to policy outcomes.

The first audience is the Iranian leadership, which seems contradictory, given that the INP is securitised. However, this address plays a crucial role in the discourse as Obama makes his decision to (de-)securitise and the measures dependent on the Iranian behaviour, i.e. the degree of compliance: "Iran's leaders have a choice between two paths" (3/19/2015). If Iran is compliant with international rules and takes a constructive stance in a joint deal it can become a part of the international community, whereas continued defiance will have coercive measures as a consequence (9/25/2009). While this contains calls to compliance it is oftentimes conveyed with urgency (3/26/2012) and accompanied by a de-securitising move towards the Iranian people: "Iran's leaders must choose whether they will try to build a weapon or build a better future for their people" (4/6/2009). Obama directly addresses Iranian leadership with his proposal to accept a peaceful nuclear programme if Iran renounces weaponization: "And my message to Iran's leaders and people has been simple and

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[104] In this context, Obama refers to the JCPOA blocking all such paths.

consistent: Do not let this opportunity pass. We can reach a solution that meets your energy needs while assuring the world that your program is peaceful" (9/24/2014).

The second is the US American audience, both the public and its representatives in Congress. Obama rarely addressed this audience directly and did so mostly to convince it of the JCPOA's effectiveness and counter its manifold critics stating that "you are going to hear a lot of overheated and often dishonest arguments about it (…). So today I want to take a moment to take those on one by one and explain what this deal does and what it means" (7/15/2015). Thus, his primary goal is to "keep Congress and the American people fully briefed on the substance of the deal" (4/4/2015) and "make sure the people know the facts" (7/21/2015). These addresses stress the importance to convince the audience about the measure to ensure its acceptance. Especially the ratification in Congress is essential (4/2/2015):

> "If Congress kills this deal, we will lose more than just constraints on Iran's nuclear program or the sanctions we have painstakingly built. We will have lost something more precious: America's credibility as a leader of diplomacy, America's credibility as the anchor of the international system" (8/5/2015).

By ratifying the JCPOA, US Congress enabled it as a measure and securitisation to be successful.

5.1.5 Extraordinary Measures

The point of no return is narrowly linked to the measures by which it can be avoided. First, Obama outlines coercive means such as imposing the "most comprehensive, the hardest hitting" (12/16/2011) and "toughest sanctions ever on the Iranian regime" (5/22/2011). While he describes the United States' commitment to diplomacy, he stresses that coercion will not stop until Iran retreats from its weaponization intentions: "If Iran does not take steps in the near future to live up to its obligations, then the United States will not continue to negotiate indefinitely, and we are prepared to move towards increased pressure" (10/1/2009). While this choice posed to the Iranian regime is inherent to Obamas dual policy approach (11/15/2009), and he pledges to "enforce our own sanctions on Iran", he does so "alongside our friends and our allies" (6/9/2010). Thus, he overwhelmingly displays a joint international approach towards the enforcement of measures, as this allows "to apply pressure that goes far beyond

anything that the United States could do" on its own (3/4/2012). This includes cooperation with the international community: "We are working together at the United Nations Security Council to pass strong sanctions on Iran" (4/8/2010), especially the UN and its resolutions (9/23/2010). Obama also stresses, that the US succeeded in building "a global coalition to deal with Iran" (3/14/2016), and "we've secured the most comprehensive international sanctions (…) which have been joined by allies and partners around the world" (5/22/2011), whereby the "we" is interchangeable with "the world" (3/26/2012). This is in line with the earlier statements that the threat posed by the INP is global and not merely American in scope.

Second, further coercive measures are subsumed under Obama's phrase: "I keep all options on the table" (1/20/2015). While this "all options" code seems overly broad, closer analysis demonstrates that it primarily hints towards a possible use of force: Obama stresses that, if Iranian non-compliance with international rules continues, it "must be held accountable" (9/23/2010) and will "face consequences" (9/26/2009) in a process during which the US "will do what we must" (9/25/2012) and "will do everything in our power" (4/23/2012) to prevent Iran to acquire nuclear weaponry. While these statements hint vaguely towards forceful measures, Obama speaks out more directly on other occasions: "There are times when force is necessary, and if Iran does not abide by this deal, it's possible that we don't have an alternative" (8/5/2015) and "I will repeat that we take no options off the table, including military options" (9/30/2013). Finally, he outlines that the "military options are real" (8/5/2015) for him: "I will not hesitate to use force when it is necessary to defend the United States and its interests" (3/4/2012).

Third, the JCPOA is outlined as a measure to prevent an Iranian NW. While the engagement leading to the deal is coded as de-securitisation, the displaying of the deal as preventing weaponization occurs in a securitising manner. Thus, it is equal to an extraordinary measure. While a treaty falls under the sphere of "normal" political action, due to the decade-long interruption of diplomatic relations and US-Iranian animosity, it is still "extraordinary" in this case[105]. Obama describes the Nuclear Deal as "a milestone in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon" (1/17/2016). Under the treaty, Iran is subjected "to the most comprehensive nuclear inspections ever negotiated" (4/1/2016). Thanks to these verification measures, "every pathway to a

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[105] cf. p.14 and p.86 of the present work on the non-binary character of (de-)securitisation.

nuclear weapon is cut off" (7/14/2015) and the potential breakout time is prolonged from few months to a year, with any such attempts being immediately detectable by the IAEA inspecting the Iranian nuclear sites (1/17/2016). The deal provides a long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear threat: "So this deal actually pushes Iran further away from a bomb. And there is a permanent prohibition on Iran ever having a nuclear weapon" (7/18/2015). Contrastingly, without the JCPOA, "Iran could move closer to a nuclear bomb" (7/21/2015).

5.1.6 De-Securitisation

As outlined in the theoretical part of the paper, contrary to securitisation, there is no theorized procedure of de-securitisation. Frequently, de-securitisation cannot be traced in a speech act, as it happens by mere silencing. However, in the present project, de-securitising rhetoric is traced in Obama's discourse: Especially the context of the JCPOA applies to Hansen's concept of *rearticulation* (2012, p. 542-543): The engagement policy leading to the treaty is a political solution to the previously securitised issue. In this case study, de-securitisation is described in four steps which have been traced inductively by coding the speeches.

First, Obama's concession to a civic nuclear programme represents a de-securitisation of the existential threat: "Iran has a right to peaceful nuclear power that meets the energy needs of its people" (9/25/2009). This right is enshrined in the NPT and being part of the treaty, it is valid for Iran as for all of its members (3/36/2012). However, as for all nations, this right is bound to responsibilities - the non-acquisition of nuclear weaponry - with which Iran has to comply (4/6/2009). If Iran is compliant with those rules, the US is even willing to "support Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy" (4/5/2009). Therefore, while the weaponization path remains securitised, the INP itself is de-securitised with Obama being the first US president to do so.

Second, Obama poses Iran's leadership a choice, giving them a chance to influence his discourse: Either further securitisation of the issue or partial de-securitisation. He concretely offers either a diplomatic solution to the issue in case of Iran's willingness to abandon its weaponization plans or an increase of coercive measures, by leaving the decision to Iranian leaders:

"And so from my very first months in office, we put forward a very clear choice to the Iranian regime: a path that would allow them to rejoin the community of nations if they meet their international obligations or a path that leads to an escalating series of consequences if they don't" (3/4/2012).

He advocates for the "far better" peaceful path (1/24/2012), stressing that it would benefit both Iran and the world (6/9/2010, 4/2/2015). This path, on which Iran would convince the international community that it has only peaceful intentions regarding its programme would be the "right decision" (3/4/2012). Thus, by complying with the US, Iran can face a better future: "If Iran is willing to walk through the door of opportunity that's presented to them, then I have no doubt that it can open up extraordinary opportunities for Iran and their people" (1/13/2014). Furthermore, Obama legitimizes sanctions by declaring them as a tool to push Iran towards engagement (9/28/2015).

Third, similar to the extraordinary measures of securitisation, Obama offers a de-securitising measure: engagement and diplomacy. The Obama administration has offered dialogue to Iran since its early days (4/5/2009, p. 39 of this work), but has stressed that this is only possible if the Iranian regime chooses to comply with its international obligations (9/17/2009). This is not merely desirable for Iran itself but also the US: "We want Iran to play its rightful role in the community of nations. Iran is a great civilization" (4/6/2009). Thereby Obama de-securitises the Iranian nation. President Obama advocates diplomacy as the "best option by far" (4/2/2015) throughout his presidency, as: "Peace is far more preferable to war" (3/21/2013). He further underlines the seriousness of his engagement intentions by stating that "we're not interested in talking for the sake of talking" (10/1/2009). Alongside engagement, he also stresses the effectiveness of sanctions, outlining his dual-track policy of pressure and diplomacy (3/4/2012). However, in the wake of the final agreement President Obama points out that no new sanctions shall be amended by Congress, given the advanced stage of diplomacy (1/13/2014). Finally, the successful outcome of US-Iranian engagement is the JCPOA, posing "the possibility of peacefully resolving a major threat to regional and international security" (7/15/2015). Thus, Obama has reached his goal of avoiding military action by achieving "this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to another war in the Middle East" (1/17/2016).

Finally, after the engagement has led to the Nuclear Deal, Obama outlines Iran's compliance under the JCPOA: "Iran has met all of its obligations" (4/2/2015).

Concretely, the country has shipped out almost its entire stockpile of enriched uranium, dismantled the majority of its centrifuges, and the Arak reactor has been made unusable by concreting its core (4/1/2016). Thus, the progress of the Iranian programme was halted under continuing inspections (8/5/2015) and Iran no longer possesses the capability of producing "even one bomb" (1/17/2016). In return for its compliant behaviour, the US is willing to take back its extraordinary measures - sanctions imposed both by the UNSC and the American government (4/2/2015, 4/4/2015). These descriptions indicate, that - if Iran continues on this path - it is no longer a threat and there is no further need for securitisation. Describing Iran as a compliant country under a joint treaty demonstrates the repoliticization of the issue and the end of securitisation - at least in Obama's presidential discourse.

5.1.7 Conclusion

The analysis of Obama's rhetoric leads to several conclusions regarding his discourse. First, Obama strongly focuses on the international level, especially regarding the referent object. Despite being the US president, he does not prioritize national security but describes both the non-proliferation regime and the international community most frequently as entities threatened by the INP, whereas the US plays a minor role, often mentioned alongside the international level. The Iranian nuclear programme is a global issue and to prevent a NW is in the interest of humankind just as the preservation of the NPT guarantees the end of proliferation and diminishes the risk of nuclear conflict. Therefore, Iranian non-compliance poses a significant threat not only by violating the NPT but also other international rules such as the IAEA and later the USCR. Regarding the measures, a strong focus lies on international cooperation via the UN.

Second, as Obama securitises nuclear weapons *per se* in his discourse, preventing an Iranian NW is part of his commitment to a world without nuclear weapons (4/5/2009). Therefore, the primary threat is the weaponization path and the eventual use of a nuclear weapon, not the nuclear programme itself. While Obama outlines the nature of the regime and the unstable region as supplementary threats and reasons to hinder an Iranian NW by all means, he primarily stresses that Iran is not permitted a NW due to its NPT membership. Thus, Iran is treated equally to every other NNWS country when it is denied NWs and not singled out due to US-Iranian feuds.

Third, analysing Obama's speeches, a range of multiple codes is used in analysing Obama's speeches[106]. They provide an overview as to how securitisation aspects are linked to each other, enabling causal explanations between the different steps of securitisation. So, a potential nuclear arms race is extremely dangerous given the instability of the Middle East and has disastrous consequences for the international community. Further, the point of no return remains the same throughout the presidency: even when diplomacy is announced, it still has the goal to prevent NWs. The consequence of avoiding nuclear weapons at all costs is the inability to take any options off the table. In turn, the choice of compliance or defiance is directed to the Iranian leaders as an audience. While sanctions are primarily the consequence of non-compliance, non-compliant behaviour is especially threatening to the NPT. Interestingly, as described below, both sanctions and diplomacy are assigned to the same text segments, indicating Obama's dual-track policy.

Fourth, Obama securitises Israel to the greatest degree, declaring a possibly nuclear-armed Iran as an *existential* threat (3/20/2013, 3/21/2013), which was not the case regarding the other ROs. On both occasions President Obama addressed Israeli audiences, indicating that the type of the audience influences the degree of securitisation. Throughout his presidency, he used more securitising elements when addressing Israeli audiences, underlining the US' aim of preventing an Iranian bomb and ensuring Israeli security even in the face of diplomatic engagement with Iran.

Fifth, the present analysis confirms the dual-track policy used by Obama in the wake of the JCPOA. Counting both the joint sanctions and "all options", indicating mostly military action, as coercive measures and the deal and engagement as non-coercive, Obamas dual-track policy occurs in equal parts[107]. He addresses this approach directly in his speeches: "That's how we build a global coalition to deal with Iran: strong sanctions plus diplomacy" (3/14/2016). Thus, the resulting success of engagement is used as legitimation for earlier sanctions. Following this logic, coercive measures are not merely a reaction to the threat but also a condition to bring about de-securitisation, as they enable the Iranian willingness to comply. Joint sanctions and diplomacy are thus, also multiple codes.

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[106] Multiple codes are retrieved in the QDA Miner using following commands: Retrieve, Coding retrieval, select codes, search, display results using the coding table. In this table, multiple codes are shown by "include" (y in x), "overlaps" (x and y), "within" (x in y).
[107] 46,7% coercion, 53,3% engagement

Sixth, Obama uses extensive de-securitisation in his discourse, proposing a political solution to the threat - engagement leading to a joint agreement. Hansen (2012) describes this as rearticulation[108], the most frequent form of de-securitisation, which occurs when negotiation is preferred to and deemed more effective than securitisation. In contrast to securitisation there is no theory describing de-securitising steps, the present research project attempted to trace such steps by inductive coding. Initially, the right to nuclear power is identified, representing a partly de-securitised threat: A peaceful INP is no longer a threat. Then, the choice posed to Iranian leaders represents a threshold to possible de-securitisation, and compliance is the condition to do so. This "bargain" is reached with the threatening entity, the Iranian regime: If it complies, a political solution to the issue is possible. While the point of no return in securitisation symbolizes the threat's consequences becoming irreversible, the choice in de-securitisation is a point of change in the discourse. Next, diplomacy is a measure, though contrary to the "extraordinary" measures of securitisation, it is a *political* measure. Engagement replaces coercion with a peaceful solution, as Obama stresses: "Because we negotiated with Iran and enforced strong sanctions, we reached a deal that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb, and we did it without firing a shot" (6/2/2016). Furthermore, Iranian compliance is the effective result of de-securitisation. The JCPOA and Iran abiding by it make the ROs secure again. The threatening entity gives up what constitutes the threat to the RO, in this case, nuclear weapons. Thus, it is relevant to point out, that the ultimate goal of both de- and securitisation remains the same: avoiding an Iranian bomb. It is primarily the means that distinguish both processes. These steps are merely a rudimentary attempt of theorization, deriving from the pattern of securitisation theory, which needs further verification through research. In conclusion, while rearticulation is dominant, an indication for replacement occurs during Obama's second term, where he focuses more on defending the Nuclear Deal than securitisation, thereby de-securitising the INP.

Seventh, Obama uses simultaneous (de-)securitisation in his discourse. As described by Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard, the threat - the INP - is split: A peaceful programme is de-securitised while weaponization capacity and NWs are still securitised. The authors outline that simultaneity is used in case of conflicting interests, which in this case are Obama's aim to solve the issue peacefully while satisfying conservative

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[108] cf. p. 85 of the present work

audiences at home and in allied Israel. The simultaneity is expressed by conceding the right of peaceful nuclear energy while hindering a NW by any means. Furthermore, it is also traceable in the field of measures: "Now, I want to be clear: These sanctions do not close the door on diplomacy" (6/9/2010). While Obama introduces sanctions as a consequence of Iranian non-compliance, he offers the Iranian regime the path of diplomacy and thus an eventual repoliticization of the issue. However, in the wake of the JCPOA, Obama securitises new sanctions in Congress as hindering diplomacy. This displays that de- and securitisation are not strictly binary but interrelated and constituting each other. Securitisation enables de-securitisation (sanctions brought Iran to the negotiating table) and de-securitisation enables renewed securitisation as the following discourse of President Trump displays.

5.2 The President's Rhetoric: Donald J. Trump (2016-2020)

5.2.1 Existential Threat

While his predecessor has de-securitised the Iranian nuclear programme at the end of his second term, President Trump resumed the rhetoric of the "Iranian nuclear threat" (5/8/2018) of the pre- and early Obama era. Despite the JCPOA and Iran's compliance, Trump was convinced throughout his presidency, that Iran aims at developing nuclear weapons, calling a potentially peaceful programme a "giant fiction" (5/8/2018) and warning that "as we have seen in North Korea, the longer we ignore the threat, the worse the threat becomes" (10/13/2017). Thus, Trump is convinced that Iran will succeed on its way to become a NWS as North Korea did. He uses alleged violations of the treaty to prove his assumptions, stating that the Iranian operation of centrifuges and accumulation of heavy water succeeds the treaty's limits (10/13/2017). This "very real threat of Iran's nuclear breakout" cannot be tolerated (10/13/2017), as the "fanatical quest for nuclear weapons and the means of delivering them" exceed all other dangerous actions by the Iranian regime (5/8/2018). As this quote implies, Trump links the Iranian Ballistic Missiles Programme to the INP, describing missiles with potentially nuclear warheads as illicit activity[109] (9/26/2018). Furthermore, an Iranian bomb would spark the proliferation in the region: "Everyone would want their weapons

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[109] Ballistic missiles can carry nuclear warheads. The Iranian Ballistic Missiles programme, is however, distinct from the INP and excluded in the JCPOA.

ready by the time Iran had theirs" (5/8/2018), thus describing the programme as "illicit" (10/13/2017) and an Iranian nuclear weapon as "lunacy" (5/8/2018). Therefore, the first threat described by the President involves the nuclear programme and its weaponization path, similarly to Obama. However, Trump goes even further and speaks of an "extensive" (5/8/2019) and "secret nuclear weapons archive" (9/21/2020) on two occasions, indicating his belief that Iran has already achieved some form of nuclear weaponry[110].

Second, President Trump strongly securitises the JCPOA, describing it as "one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into" (9/19/2017). According to Trump, the deal fails its objective, making too many concessions to the Iranians: While the deal is "phenomenal" for Iran, it is "horrible" for the US (10/16/2017). The treaty especially benefits Iranian leaders by providing them "a political and economic lifeline" (10/13/2017). With the "financial boost" permitted by the deal, the Iranian Government was able to "fund terrorism" (10/13/2017). Besides financing the regime's malign activities, the JCPOA is unable to prevent Iranian weaponization intentions: Given the timely limited rules, Iran can rapidly achieve nuclear weapons (10/13/2017). Thus, Iran is on the "brink of a nuclear breakout" due to the treaty's "weak limits" (5/8/2018). Because of its flaws, primarily its failure to block Iran's weaponization paths (8/6/2018), Trump describes the JCPOA's as "decaying", "rotten" and "defective at its core" (5/8/2018). Thus, its "sunset provisions are totally unacceptable" (5/8/2018). Furthermore, the deal enables "nuclear proliferation all over the Middle East" (5/9/2018) and fails to regulate the country's BM programme (5/8/2018). The deal was no longer acceptable for the US as it "would have funded all of the chaos and the bloodshed and the terror in the region and all throughout the world" (8/19/2020). Therefore, Trump decided to withdraw from the agreement: "I recently declined to certify the disaster known as the Nuclear Deal. A total disaster" (12/8/2017). President Trump accuses the Obama administration of causing this threat: The "previous administration" (7/24/2018) had sided with the Iranian regime and threatened US interests by "foolishly" agreeing to give up sanctions in exchange for a "weak" (1/12/2018), "bad" (12/18/2017) and "disastrously flawed" deal (1/12/2018).

Third, the nature of the Iranian regime poses a threat in their quest for nuclear weaponry: Trump describes it as a "dictatorship" (10/13/2017) and a "murderous

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[110] There is no known proof that Iran possesses nuclear weaponry yet.

regime" (9/19/2017, 5/8/2018), supporting "violence, bloodshed, and chaos across the Middle East" (10/5/2017). In the wake of the JCPOA, the "regime's dangerous aggression" (10/13/2017) has augmented, as it provided funds for terrorist activities and fuelling conflict in the ME (8/6/2018). Due to this behaviour, the US "will not allow the Iranian regime to further advance capabilities to directly threaten and terrorize the rest of the world" (9/21/2020), i.e. to succeed in acquiring the bomb. The Iranian regime poses an existential threat to the US and its allies and can never be entrusted with such weaponry:

> "We cannot allow the world's leading sponsor of terrorism to possess the planet's most dangerous weapons. We cannot allow a regime that chants 'Death to America' and that threatens Israel with annihilation to possess the means to deliver a nuclear warhead to any city on Earth" (9/25/2018).

As Simon (2017, p. 209) indicates, for Trump, Iran is the "root of all evil"[111]. This statement is confirmed with the present analysis of the president's rhetoric and the primary reason for his fierce securitisation of the INP: "Everywhere we go in the Middle East it's Iran, Iran, Iran. Behind every problem is Iran" (3/13/2018).

Fourth, Trump describes Iranian non-compliance with the JCPOA, accusing it of "multiple violations of the agreement", exceeding its limits and "intimidating inspectors into not using the full inspection authorities that the agreement calls for" (10/13/2017). Furthermore, he accuses Iran of lying about its programme and aiming at secretly developing nuclear weapons (9/21/2020), "not living up to the spirit of the deal" (10/13/2017). However, Trump does not explicitly point out non-compliance to international rules or institutions, merely hinting to the IAEA through "inspectors" (10/13/2017) and given that according to him, the JCPOA enables an Iranian NW by itself, non-compliance does not play a leading role as a threat in his discourse.

5.2.2 Referent Object

First, Trump outlines the USA as a RO, being threatened by Tehran's pursuit of NW, including uranium enrichment and "belligerent acts directed against the United States and its allies" (6/24/2019). He frequently outlines the US alongside its allies as the RO, with Iran continuing to threaten them in the wake of the Nuclear Deal (8/6/2018). The

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[111] cf. p. 49 of the present work

JCPOA is further endangering US interests by giving "Iran far too much in exchange for far too little" (1/12/2018). According to Trump, the deal even enables Iran to hurt American citizen: "Under the Iran nuclear deal, Iran was free to (…) unjustly detain United States citizens" (5/8/2019). Therefore, by speaking of the "Iranian menace that threatens the United States" (12/6/2018b), Trump outlines that the primary threat to the US is Iran and its regime, rather than the INP. It is the nature of the regime that existentially threatens the United States: On several occasions, he brings up the Iranian "Death to America" chants as proof of Iranian enmity towards the US (12/7/2019; 12/6/2018a). Thus, the possession of nuclear weaponry would be fatal for the US:

> "America will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail. We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction. And we will not allow a regime that chants 'Death to America' to gain access to the most deadly weapons on Earth" (5/8/2018).

The second referent object outlined in Trump's discourse is Israel, given that "Iran's nuclear ambitions" are part of the "enormous" security challenges Israelis are facing (2/15/2017). Also, Trump states that the JCPOA "hurts" Israel (5/9/2018), by failing to prevent an Iranian NW: "Look at the Iran deal. It's the worst thing that ever happened to Israel" (8/21/2020). Furthermore, the Iranian regime "threatens Israel all of the time with annihilation" posing an existential threat to the country (12/6/2018a). Trump lists this as a reason for preventing an Iranian NW, implying that it could be used to let Iranian words follow with deeds, destroying Israel with a nuclear attack. Additionally, Iran seeks not merely to destroy the Israeli state but "threatens genocide against Jewish people" (2/5/2019). George W. Bush had previously used similar rhetoric, inciting the image of the "nuclear holocaust" triggered by an Iranian bomb[112]. Therefore, this RO also includes the Jewish nation alongside the Israeli state.

Finally, third, Trump extends the referent object to the broad term "world". Once Iranian nuclear warheads are developed, they would have the potential to reach "any city on earth" (9/25/2018), for which reason "the world cannot afford to sit idly by as Iran builds a nuclear weapon" (9/21/2020). Primarily, the Nuclear Deal "hurts" the world (5/9/2018) and enables Iran to "further advance capabilities to directly threaten and terrorize the rest of the world" (9/21/2020). Therefore, the US has to collaborate with its allies on

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[112] cf. p. 39 of this work

the flaws of the deal, "so that the Iranian regime can never threaten the world with nuclear weapons" (10/13/2017). Those who are not willing to join America on this path, are siding with the Iran regime and its ambitions "against (…) the peaceful nations of the world" (1/12/2018). Thus, President Trump concretises, for whom the Iranian nuclear programme is especially threatening: "the civilized world" (1/8/2020). A further concretisation of "world" takes place in one instance, where Trump outlines that Iran also "undermines the international financial system" (8/6/2018).

5.2.3 Point of No Return

Trump's discourse thus far has already outlined the point of no return that must be avoided: "Iran will never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon" (1/10/2020). As long as he is President, Trump pledges, he will aim at avoiding this point of no return (1/8/2018) and his policies will "ensure that Iran never - and I mean never - acquires a nuclear weapon" (10/13/2017). In his discourse, he repeatedly stresses the endurance of this issue: "My administration will not allow this Iran nuclear situation to go on. They will never have a nuclear weapon. Iran will never have - mark it down. Mark it down: Iran will never have a nuclear weapon" (8/19/2020). Due to Trump's policy decisions such as the withdrawal from the JCPOA (2/5/2019), he is convinced of preventing it: "I can only tell you we cannot ever let Iran have a nuclear weapon. And it won't happen" (6/24/2019). The conviction of the Iranian nuclear threat is further shared by the US and its allies, as well as the belief it shall not be realized (5/8/2018), also given the Iranian regime's nature: "We will not allow the world's leading sponsor of terror to develop the world's deadliest weapons. Will not happen" (10/25/2018). Finally, the Iranian nuclear *capabilities* have to be limited indefinitely, hindering weaponization: "My policy is to deny Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon, not just for 10 years, but forever" (1/12/2018).

5.2.4 Audience

It is difficult to trace the audience in the discourse, as Trump rarely addresses his audience directly. The present chapter is thus limited to two audiences, an Iranian one and a domestic one. First, Trump calls on Iranian leaders to "abandon its nuclear

ambitions (…) and return in good faith to the negotiating table" (11/2/2018). He states that Iran "faces a choice": Either to continue this way and become increasingly isolated or change its behaviour and get reintegrated into the international community (8/6/2018). However, Trump's calls for compliance are not accompanied by concrete incentives and therefore remain unheard.

Second, President Trump addresses the US public and especially US allies. He directly addresses the citizen, briefing them on the measures against the Iranian INP: "My fellow Americans: Today I want to update the world on our efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon" (5/8/2018). Further, he reassures that the Iranian threat will be prevented and its death chants not become reality: "It will not be our death, I promise you that" (12/6/2018b). Also, he directs a "call on all our allies" (1/12/2018) for joint measures against Iran and the JCPOA: He addresses the "members of the Security Council to work with the United States" in avoiding an Iranian nuclear weapon (9/26/2018) and urges the remaining parties of the treaty - the UK, Germany, France, Russia and China - to recognize the flaws of the deal and break with it (1/8/2020). If its allies do not stand with the US, consequences will be drawn:

> "I hereby call on key European countries to join with the United States in fixing significant flaws in the deal, countering Iranian aggression, and supporting the Iranian people. If other nations fail to act during this time, I will terminate our deal with Iran." (1/12/2018)

Beyond the US allies, Trump urges "all nations to take such steps" (8/6/2018) and asks "all nations to isolate Iran's regime" (9/25/2018) so that Iran has to face a decision - continuing or - preferably - ceding its nuclear ambitions.

In both instances the audiences did not comply, the Iranians continued their nuclear programme, exceeding JCPOA limits and the US continued its unilateralism, as its allies stuck to the treaty, not following the US on its coercive path. Contrary to the classical role of the audience, in this case, the measures were a result of the non-acceptance of the audience, as outlined in the conclusion.

5.2.5 Extraordinary Measures

First, Trump expresses the need to impose unprecedented sanctions and pressure on Iran to avoid the point of no return. He stresses the force of the coercive measures he

is about to impose: The sanctions will not only be the "toughest ever" put on Iran (8/19/2020) but "the strongest (…) that we've ever put on a country" (5/9/2018). In the wake of the 5th of November withdrawal from the JCPOA "all U.S. sanctions against Iran lifted by the Nuclear Deal will be back in full force - every sanction that we had on there originally" (10/25/2018). Thus, the Trump administration is "successfully imposing the most powerful maximum pressure campaign ever witnessed" on Iran (5/8/2019). Reinstating the nuclear-related sanctions means "instituting the highest level of economic sanction", and any nation continuing its collaboration with Iran on nuclear issues will be the target of US sanctions itself (5/8/2018). Concretely, the sanctions target multiple sectors of the Iranian economy, whose revenues may be used for its nuclear programme, namely the energy, shipping and banking sector (11/2/2018), later also the iron, steel, aluminium and copper sectors (5/8/2019) and finally construction, manufacturing, textiles and mining sectors (1/10/2020). Additionally, Trump invoked the snapback mechanism at the UN for reimposing its sanctions (8/19/2020) and targeted the IAEO and individuals connected to the Iranian programme and nuclear proliferation (9/21/2020). Trump also asks his allies to follow the US on isolating Iran until it changes its noncompliant behaviour (9/25/2018) and underlines, that until a new more comprehensive deal will be negotiated, "our historic sanctions will remain in full force" (11/2/2018).

Second, similarly to the sanctions, the withdrawal from the JCPOA is mostly announced not as a possible, but as an eventual measure. Trump started introducing the process of withdrawal by announcing the non-certification of the deal requested by the INARA: "I am announcing today that we cannot and will not make this certification. We will not continue down a path whose predictable conclusion is (…) the very real threat of Iran's nuclear breakout" (10/13/2017). This was followed by hinting at the possible withdrawal: "(…) our participation can be cancelled by me, as President, at any time" (10/13/2017). President Trump's intention to withdraw, becomes clearer after several months, when he states, that if no better deal is reachable his words will be followed by deeds:

> "Despite my strong inclination, I have not yet withdrawn the United States from the
> Iran nuclear deal. Instead, I have outlined two possible paths forward: either fix the
> deal's disastrous flaws or the United States will withdraw. And if at any time I judge
> that such an agreement is not within reach, I will withdraw from the deal

immediately. No one should doubt my word. I said I would not certify the nuclear deal, and I did not. I will also follow through on this pledge" (1/12/2018).

Trump's determination finally led to the United States' decision to withdraw, announced in May (5/8/2018), terminating the treaty on the 5th of November (11/2/2018). The president's decision is justified by his explanation of the deal's ineffectiveness in stopping Iran's weaponization path, not addressing other threatening actions of the Iranian regime such as its BMs and underlining the sunset clauses' threat, by which the treaty was about to expire anyway, having "very little time remaining" (9/24/2019). According to Trump, by this decision, Iran is "substantially weakened" (7/12/2018) and the "United States is able to protect its national security" (8/6/2018).

Third, Trump proposes other options, which involve rather unspecific consequences for Iran. For example, anyone not compliant with sanctions "will face severe consequences" (9/26/2018), which are not outlined in further detail and leave space for interpretation. In other instances, the context hints towards possible military actions:

> "So we're going to make either a really good deal for the world, or we're not going to make a deal at all. And Iran will come back and say, 'We don't want to negotiate.' (…) But they'll negotiate, or something will happen. And hopefully, that won't be the case" (5/9/2018).

Trump pushes Iran towards negotiations by threatening with "something". Adding that he hopes he will not need to take this action and invokes that it is one of extraordinary force. Most illuminatingly, the president talks about US military capabilities in the following paragraph, stressing that "the United States is strong" and its military strength is at a level it had not been "in a long time" (5/9/2018). This hints towards a possible strike or military intervention in Iran, such as the following instances do: "If the regime continues its nuclear aspirations, it will have bigger problems than it has ever had before" (5/8/2018). Such unprecedented action might be military, as it exceeds all US measures against Iran thus far. Also, he menaces, that his sanctions will hinder terrorist funding, and if Iran is circumventing them, "they'll have hell to pay" (8/19/2020). Hinting the use of force is also the probable intention of Trump when using such rhetoric.

5.2.6 De-Securitisation

While Trump's discourse is heavily focused on securitisation, he also undertakes two de-securitising moves. First, Iranian citizens, who Trump describes as ROs of their

regime and the JCPOA: The deal allowed Iran to "brutalize its own people" (5/8/2019) providing the regime with funds it spent for terrorist activities instead of providing a better life for its citizen (1/12/2018). Thus, Iranian people are portrayed as victims of their leadership (13/13/2017) and those nations not joining the coercive US measures are siding "against the people of Iran" (1/12/2018). Therefore, President Trump distinguishes Iranian citizen and their government, especially regarding his measures against the latter: "I want to be clear that United States actions are aimed at the regime and its threatening behavior, not at the long-suffering Iranian people" (11/2/2018). For the US, neither Iran nor its people are enemies - on the contrary - but an Iranian bomb is: "We want to help them. We'll be good to them. We'll work with them. We'll help them in any way we can, but they can't have a nuclear weapon" (7/16/2019). For this, the regime must change its behaviour giving its people what they deserve: "a thriving and prosperous Iran" (9/21/2020). Instead of the JCPOA, a new deal "worthy of the Iranian people" (11/2/2018) must be negotiated, "one that benefits all of Iran and the Iranian people" (5/8/2018), granting the country "the future it deserves" (5/8/2019).

The second de-securitising move occurring in Trump's rhetoric regards a new deal with the country. The president states that he is hoping for an Iranian request for negotiations leading possibly to the successful outcome of a new deal (7/17/2018). He further assures his willingness for a new treaty, saying that "we're ready to make a real deal, not the deal that was done by the previous administration" (7/24/2018). A new deal would outcast the JCPOA and make "the world a safer and more peaceful place" (1/8/2020). Trump goes so far as to call it a "fact" that Iranian leaders "are going to want to make a new and lasting deal (…). When they do, I am ready, willing, and able" (5/8/2018). His readiness for new negotiations is also expressed by stating that the US has elaborated "12 conditions" on which a new deal could base: "I look forward to someday meeting with the leaders of Iran in order to work out an agreement" (5/8/2019). However, as there have never been negotiations between the two countries on the nuclear issue under the Trump presidency, the de-securitisation was not successful.

5.2.7 Conclusion

The analysis of Trump's discourse leads to the following conclusions: First, the President focuses primarily on the national level, concentrating on the US-American

and Israeli referent objects. While he also labels the "world" as RO, it remains rather unspecific and does not refer to international institutions or rules. Instead, the Iranian programme threatens the national security of the US and poses an existential threat to Israel, especially in the probable case of successful weaponization. The Iranian regime represents this threat in the first place, as it has expressed death threats both to the US and the Jewish nation. Equally threatening is the JCPOA, as the international agreement was made at the expense of the US who had been "taken advantage of as a nation" (10/16/2017). Finally, regarding the extraordinary measures, Trump acts in line with his "America first" policy, unilaterally withdrawing from the treaty and choosing the way of coercion without the support of his international allies.

Second, Trump does not securitise nuclear weapons themselves but sees them as a primary threat due to their potential owners: the Iranian regime. Due to the regime's ferocity towards their own people and the US alike as well as its support for terrorism it cannot be allowed to possess nuclear weaponry. For Trump, the Iranian nuclear programme has the sole purpose of weaponization, whereas a peaceful programme is mere "fiction" (5/8/2018). Thus, President Trump heavily securitises the programme under the current Iranian regime, portraying it in the manner of a "rogue state" with statements hinting towards a preferred regime change, despite his denial to do so: "We're not looking, by the way, for regime change, because some people say we're looking for regime change" (7/16/2019). In this context, Trump securitises the JCPOA as an enabler for the Iranian regime to reach its nuclear goals. As a result, the treaty is securitised more frequently in the discourse than the INP itself, which leaves the open question if Trump possibly prioritized reversing his predecessor's policies over the securitisation of the Iranian nuclear programme.

Third, similar to Obama's discourse, multiple codes are frequently used in Trump's rhetoric. Especially the "point of no return" is part of multiple coding, mainly linked to "existential threats", overwhelmingly the Iranian regime, which for Trump is the main reason why Iran must not become a NWS. Alongside coercive measures, a new deal can also help to avoid this point. Frequently, one text segment is assigned to three or more codes from various categories, displaying the securitisation process: For example, given the INP's threat to the world, the US must withdraw from the JCPOA and impose sanctions, addressing the US allies to follow this example which would benefit the Iranian people. Thus, threats, ROs, measures, audiences and de-

securitising moves are traceable in one paragraph, making Trump's speeches exemplary for the securitisation process. However, the multiple coding is also traceable within one category, especially the four existential threats are described within one sentence or paragraph to underline the urgency of the threat.

Fourth, the audience's role in Trump's discourse is also noteworthy. As indicated above, he seldom addresses the audience directly, and the only exceptions from this- the Iranian leadership and the US public i.e. its allies - do not accept the securitisation. Nevertheless, Trump's securitising moves are successful, as the measures spelt out in his speeches were executed: both the imposition of sanctions and the withdrawal from the JCPOA. Remarkably, these measures are enabled not despite but *because of* the audience's non-acceptance: Due to Iranian non-compliance with calls of abandoning their nuclear programme the Trump administration decided to re-impose sanctions and given that traditional US allies did not follow the pledge of joint measures against Iran, Trump unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and attempted to invoke a snap-back at the UN. Furthermore, for some measures such as the non-certification of the INARA or sanctions issued by executive orders (e.g. 5/8/2019,1/10/2020), the authority lays with the president and the audience's acceptance is not needed to successfully implement measures. However, it must be noted, that while the president potentially addressed his audiences indirectly, in which case they are not traceable by coding, the audience does not play a crucial role in the present analysis.

Fifth, tracing Trump's securitising discourse about the Iranian nuclear programme is hampered by overlapping securitisation of other issues regarding Iran. The securitisation of the INP is linked to the Ballistic Missile Programme, which Trump describes as a threat and criticizes for not being considered in the JCPOA. The BMs are not included in the present analysis, as their programme is distinct from the nuclear programme. Nevertheless, they are linked insofar as BM are used as delivery systems for nuclear weapons, by carrying nuclear warheads. This is also outlined by Trump, for which reason both programmes are illicit and must be sanctioned (5/8/2018, 9/24/2019). For this analysis, only remarks on ballistic missiles in the context of the JCPOA or nuclear weaponry are used. Further, the terrorist funding of the Iranian regime plays a significant role in Trump's rhetoric, as he describes it as a major sponsor of terrorism worldwide (9/26/2018). Finally, towards the end of his presidency, his securitisation was used for election campaign purposes against his democratic

opponent Joe Biden. Thereby, Trump outlined the JCPOA as a failure of the Obama-Biden presidency, naming it "this ridiculous Iran nuclear deal (…) that President Obama made along with Sleepy Joe Biden" (8/19/2020).

The sixth conclusion regards the de-securitisation in the President's discourse. Trump speaks about the INP in an overwhelmingly securitising manner. There are only two aspects linked to the deal which can be described as de-securitising: the Iranian people and the re-negotiation of the Nuclear Deal. While the Iranian regime is a threatening entity, the Iranian people are a distinct entity, being themselves ROs of the leaders. Thus, the nuclear sanctions are not targeting the Iranian population and Trump urges the regime to abandon its nuclear ambition and the misappropriation of the JCPOA funds for the sake of its citizen and their future (1/12/2018). Thus, Trump seemingly stands with the Iranian people, against their regime and those US allies who refuse to re-impose sanctions on Iran. As the JCPOA neither serves the purpose of avoiding a NW nor benefits the Iranian people, it must be abandoned by the US. However, Trump remains open for re-negotiation if the Iranian leaders are willing. He even proposes conditions for a new deal and expresses his wish to engage with Iran, as a new deal would also help the Iranian people to achieve a better life. Despite this rhetoric, there have been no steps of engagement between the two countries under Trump's presidency. Therefore, the de-securitisation remains unsuccessful and has to be described merely as a de-securitising *move.*

Seventh, despite the rare de-securitising attempts in Trump's rhetoric, there are some instances of simultaneous (de-)securitisation. These do not regard the INP as such but the measures, namely sanctions and withdrawal versus re-negotiating a new deal. This simultaneity is less present within one sentence or paragraph but more often locatable within one speech: For example, on the 8th of May 2019, Trump announces the imposition of sanctions targeting the Iranian metal sector by an Executive Order. He concludes the announcement by looking forward to a meeting with Iranian leaders to negotiate a new deal. Similarly, on another occasion, he urges Iranian leadership to re-join the negotiation table and stresses the United States' openness to another agreement (11/2/2018).

5.3 Comparing Both Administrations: Final Findings

After illustrating both presidents' discourses, they are compared outlining similarities and differences, providing answers to the research questions and validating the hypothesis. First, some general remarks on the present analysis for the contextualisation within securitisation theory: The issue of the Iranian nuclear programme and its securitisation is predominantly located in the traditional military and the political security sectors. Its location in the military sector can especially be attributed to the president's conviction that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. These would be the military threat *par excellence*, endangering the survival of nations and humankind. The Iranian NW is an external military threat and is further classified not as a county's actual military capability, but as the *perception* of military capabilities and intentions. As outlined by Buzan et al. (1998, p.52), this leads to responses on future rather than present capabilities. This is the case with the Iranian programme, as the potential weaponization is securitised. As outlined in the context chapter, these perceptions stem from historic US-Iranian enmities. The issue is classifiable in the political sector particularly regarding the threats to the international community and its laws. This is mainly the case in Obama's discourse, where the NPT as an international regime is threatened. Furthermore, the actors in both sectors are state representatives or leaders as in the present case. While it is obvious that Presidents Obama and Trump are the actors, it must be noted that a speech is not merely the product of one person (Wodak 2015), thus, the presidents are also "speaking on behalf of".

The main research question asked how the Obama and Trump administrations (de-)securitised the Iranian nuclear programme and to what extent this rhetoric was used to legitimize their foreign policy towards Iran. At first, both presidents are convinced that Iran is using its programme to acquire a nuclear weapon and that this development must be avoided at any cost. Therefore, both presidents describe the Iranian nuclear programme and its successful weaponization as an existential threat to the US, Israel and the world. Obama emphasises that the threat posed by Iranian non-compliance with international rules endangers the international community and the NPT, hindering his vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In contrast to this, Trump sees the JCPOA, enabling Iran to build the bomb and the dictatorial and terrorist-funding nature of the

Iranian regime as the main threats posed primarily to the US and Israel. Thus, Obama focuses on the international level, alongside the regional, pointed out by the danger of a possible arms race in the volatile ME region, and Trump prioritizes the national security of both the US and its ally Israel (cf. Fig. 4 and 5). To avoid the common point of no return, an Iranian NW, the presidents both choose coercive measures such as sanctions and do not exclude the possibility of a military strike. Furthermore, they choose very distinct paths: While Obama uses diplomatic engagement alongside coercion - his so-called dual-track approach -, recognizing the Iranian right to peaceful nuclear energy and advocating a joint treaty with Iran to solve the issue by political means, Trump withdraws from the treaty, displaying an all-coercive approach of measures (cf. Fig. 6). Moreover, Obama's sanctions were backed by the UN, while Trump's coercive measures are applied by the US unilaterally. Both presidents directly address Iranian and US audiences. Obama is successful in doing so, convincing the Iranian leaders to comply and the US public and Congress to ratify the JCPOA, whereas Trump can neither convince Iranian leaders to give up their nuclear ambitions nor US allies to follow his path of coercion. Thus, Obama's measures are applied by the audience's acceptance in line with securitisation theory while Trump's are applied because of their non-acceptance. While Obama's de-securitisation successful results in diplomacy and Iranian compliance with the JCPOA, Trump's de-securitisation merely includes the Iranian people and the re-negotiation of the deal that never occurred, remaining a de-securitising move. The presidents' (de-)securitising discourse legitimizes their policies i.e. measures: Obama's securitisation legitimizes the sanctions by which Iranian leaders are brought to the negotiation table and his de-securitisation legitimizes engagement with Iran and the elaboration of a joint treaty, banning the nuclear threat. Trump's securitisation of the Iranian programme and the JCPOA legitimizes his coercive approach, namely sanctions and the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA.

A further research question asked about the process of simultaneous (de-)securitisation in the presidents' discourse. In President Obama's discourse, a simultaneous (de-)securitisation is observable, as he de-securitises a peaceful Iranian nuclear programme while securitising the possible weaponization path. Since Trump's de-securitisation is classifiable simply as a move, the simultaneity is only traceable regarding the measures - sanctions versus re-negotiation, but not regarding the INP.

Another aspect of research regards the influence of (de-)securitisation on the establishment and the abolition of the JCPOA. As Obama is convinced that a peaceful solution to the issue is preferable to war, he de-securitised a peaceful programme and proposed engagement as a measure. A joint treaty would further help to avoid the point of no return - an Iranian bomb - and pose a political solution to the issue. His de-securitising discourse led to the successful implementation of the JCPOA and re-politicized the INP. Trump, however, depicted the JCPOA as the major threat in his re-securitising rhetoric, outweighing the programme itself. For him, the treaty does not prevent an Iranian weapon but spurs weaponization and malign activities by the Iranian regime. Withdrawing from the treaty is thus a measure to secure the referent objects and avoid the point of no return. Thus, their rhetoric legitimizes the presidents' actions regarding the JCPOA.

The hypothesis of the present work assumed that both administrations used a rhetoric of simultaneous (de-)securitisation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme, with Obama focusing mostly on de-securitisation and Trump favouring securitisation, demonstrated by the establishment of and retreating from the JCPOA. The hypothesis is not validated by the present analysis, as only Obama uses a simultaneous (de-)securitisation in his discourse, while Trump's de-securitising moves are not successful. Compared to Obama's discourse, Trump does not prioritize de-securitisation over securitisation and uses less and ultimately not successful de-securitising rhetoric. Obama, in line with his dual-track policy, uses both rhetorics in equal terms if including the measures-codes (deal, engagement vs. sanctions, all options). However, comparing the de-securitisation category to those describing the securitisation process, securitisation significantly outweighs de-securitisation: Nearly 80% of the coded segments in Obama's speeches are coded as securitising steps compared to merely 20% of codes being assigned to de-securitisation. Therefore, both presidents primarily securitised the INP, with Obama succeeding in de-securitisation by the successful establishment of the JCPOA and Trump failing with his rare de-securitising moves, fully re-securitising the issue previously politicized under Obama.

6. Concluding Remarks: Summary and Outlook

In Spring 2021, diplomatic representatives of the United States and Iran are meeting in Vienna alongside their Russian, Chinese, German, French and British counterparts. The reason for their gathering is a decade-long issue of US-Iranian controversy and enmity: The Iranian nuclear programme. The roots of the project date back to the 1960s, when the Iranian monarchy was led by the Shah, a close ally of the US. While the United States were initially enthusiastic about the monarch's plans for energy diversification and modernisation, fears about a possible weaponization plan in the back of the Shah's head mingled the euphoria of American leaders. Despite his Western allegiances, the Iranian Shah did not promote democracy and his alleged modernization goals aimed at restoring Iranian greatness and glory without substantially improving the life of Iranian citizens, who saw the nuclear programme as just another excess of the Shah's hubris. Before the United States could either assuage its worries with a treaty or the Shah's programme could lay more than a few rudimentary grounds for the nuclear programme, the Islamic revolution brought the citizen's rage to the streets, sweeping the corrupt monarchy from its throne.

The new regime in Tehran would be Washington's antagonist in the decades to come: fanatically religious, anti-Western and soon enough keen to restart the country's nuclear programme. In the wake of the hostage-taking at the US embassy during the uprising and the end of diplomatic relations between both countries, the nuclear programme quickly represented the American nightmare of nuclear terrorism. Despite the Mullah's initial difficulties in spurring the programme due to the post-revolutionary brain drain, they finally restarted the project with the support of the Russian, Chinese and the illicit Pakistani A.Q. Khan network. Viewed from the White House, with US-Iranian relations still at edges, the Iranian nuclear threat augmented over time, culminating in the early 2000's nuclear crisis. Diplomatic approaches have been rare in the previous years and reformers usually did not meet a counterpart sharing their ambition in Tehran or Washington respectively, cementing the US-Iranian history as one of mutual mistrust and misunderstandings. With the revelation of secret nuclear plants in 2002, violating the commitments under the NPT, which Iran had signed, the nuclear crisis reached its peak. George W. Bush's rhetoric is exemplary for the American position towards Iran at the time, singling the country out as a "rogue state" and member of the "axis of evil" at the verge of committing a nuclear holocaust against

Israel, who is an important US ally in the region. While the US seemed to have terminated any possibility of non-coercive confrontation with Iran, Europe's leaders were eager for a diplomatic solution and initiated nuclear talks with the country in the early 2000s.

It was not until Barack Obama became president in 2009, that the United States was ready to negotiate. Nevertheless, Obama's approach did not exclude coercion. Rather, he adopted a "dual-track" policy by offering Iran a diplomatic option and admitting their right to peaceful nuclear energy within the boundaries of the NPT, something that no other president had officially announced since '79. Simultaneously, he enforced further unilateral sanctions to push Iran towards engagement. After years of joint talks that also involved Russia, China, Germany, France and the UK, and multiple interim agreements reached with Iran, in 2015 an unprecedented diplomatic breakthrough was achieved: the JCPOA. Given that conservative domestic elites in both the US and Iran have been a long-standing obstacle to fruitful engagement, the outcome of the Iranian presidential election in 2013 had been a crucial event. After decades of missed opportunities, both the US and Iran had a leader willing to engage at last: President Obama and President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate policymaker experienced in holding nuclear negotiations with the West. The successful nuclear talks leading to the so-called Nuclear Deal were held by the P5+1 powers in Vienna and the core bargain of the treaty involved Iran's right to enrichment in exchange for the peaceful nature of its programme, verified by IAEA inspections. Further, Iranian compliance with the treaty would be rewarded by lifting the nuclear-related sanctions in the years to come.

What was a diplomatic victory in the eyes of its proponents was for others a way to facilitate the weaponization of the Iranian nuclear programme. The limits to Iranian enrichment and reprocessing - the two possible weaponization paths - were not sufficient for the agreement's critics in the United States. While the breakout time of the Iranian programme had been prolonged by the treaty, the measures outlined in the JCPOA had a date of expiration: The "sunset clauses" would terminate after a decade and allow - so the conviction of its opponents - Iran to start a renewed attempt in pursuing nuclear weapons. While Obama could overrule the critics with a congressional majority, ratify the JCPOA and prove Iranian compliance, his days in office were numbered. In 2016, his successor was elected from the midst of conservative voices, with an unconventional and unilateralist "America First" policy

agenda: Donald Trump. The election of President Trump was a return to the conservative's "business as usual" stance towards Iran. Similar to the pre-Obama stalemate of negotiations, the Trump administration pursued a full-coercive approach towards Tehran - despite Iranian compliance with the joint agreement. Besides the re-imposition of unilateral sanctions, this included an - equally unilateral - withdrawal from the treaty, with the other members refusing to follow the United States' new path. While the UN denied a snap-back procedure of sanctions invoked by the US, Trump's "maximum pressure" strategy resulted in the conservatives' self-fulfilling prophecy: Iran started exceeding the limits provided by the JCPOA.

Both Obama and Trump used their rhetoric to legitimize their foreign policy towards Iran, using securitisation to convey the urgency of the Iranian nuclear threat and the need for measures with which it could be encountered. It was the primary goal of this thesis to outline how the presidents used this rhetoric and if it was simultaneously enacted with its "reversal", de-securitisation. The significance of their discourse for policy measures, the establishment and withdrawal of the JCPOA stood at the centre of analysis. It was initially assumed that both administrations use simultaneous (de-)securitisation in their discourse, and while Obama prefers de-securitisation, Trump favours securitisations.

There are numerous definitions of security and Security Studies subsume various theories about what security is. For the Copenhagen School, it is a speech act and threats are merely becoming such by construction. Without construction, there is no security problem. This is the theoretical approach used in the present work. Besides introducing the securitising speech act theory, the Copenhagen School distinguishes itself by rejecting the notion of traditional security. Traditional security is understanding security in the terms of the Cold War: an external military threat directed at the sovereign nation-state whose integrity must be defended. After the end of the Cold War, this understanding was no longer sufficient to counter the new security issues arising everywhere. Thus, the Copenhagen scholars widened the security approach by adding the environmental, economic, social and political sectors. Furthermore, all levels were included in the analysis, not merely the systemic: especially, regionalizing trends were at the focus of the thinking school's research.

Speech act theory assesses the word's power to constitute reality: By saying things, things are done. Based on this assumption, Ole Wæver developed the securitising

speech act theory, an approach central to the present work and its case study's analysis. Wæver describes a process by which a political issue becomes a matter of security in several steps: An actor singles out the referent object, a threatened entity, being subjected to an existential threat. At a certain instance, the point of no return, the threat succeeds in irreversibly damaging the referent object. To ensure the latter's survival, thus, extraordinary means must be enforced. This securitising move becomes a successful securitisation by the audience's acceptance of the speech act. By securitisation, an issue is moved out of the sphere of "normal" politics, displaying the failure to deal with this issue politically. This process is no one-way road, but reversible: by de-securitisation, bringing the issue back into the political sphere. This repoliticization of an issue is the ultimate goal of securitisation.

While securitisation has been at the centre of academic research, de-securitisation has been neglected in academia, partly due to the difficulty of traceability. While securitisation is a step-by-step process traceable in discourse, de-securitisation may occur without any trace, by mere silencing of an issue. Lene Hansen is amongst the scholars advocating for more visibility of de-securitisation in academia. She describes rearticulation as one form of de-securitisation, in the course of which a political solution to the threat is found, acknowledging this as the superior solution to further securitisation. Another approach used in the present thesis is the one of simultaneous (de-)securitisation, outlined by Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard. Here, the threat is "split": part of it is still securitised, while part of it is not. Further, de-securitisation is not irreversible but can be followed by renewed securitisation.

The Copenhagen School also proposes the methodology for studying securitisation: discourse analysis. Thus, the present thesis uses discourse analysis to study the presidents' rhetoric. Given that discourse analysis is defined in multiple ways, merely its common ground is applied to the present project: the analysis of text, in this case, speeches and their context. In line with the critical discourse analysis, the power relations inherent to discourse, are also exposed. What discourse analysis misses to provide, is a technique of analysis, for which reason it is combined with content analysis. Thereby, the speeches are coded, i.e. text fragments are assigned to so-called codes, subsuming their meaning and structuring the speeches' content. Before starting the analysis, the coding frame is established, partly deductively, guided by the securitisation processes' steps, and partly inductively by coding.

The discourse analysis provides an extensive insight into Obama's and Trump's rhetorical construction of (de-)securitisation. For Obama, the primary threat lies in the weaponization of the Iranian nuclear programme and Iranian non-compliance with international rules provided by the NPT and the IAEA. This behaviour existentially threatens the international community and the non-proliferation regime, obstructing Obama's vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Thus, an arms race in the Middle East threatening the stability of the already volatile region and possible access by terrorists to this weaponry alongside the nature of the Iranian regime have to be countered. While Obama mainly focuses on the international level, he also describes the national security of the US and Israel, an important ally, as endangered. Thus, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the Iranians must be hindered by all means, in Obama's case his dual-track policy. His securitising rhetoric thereby legitimizes the measures to prevent an Iranian NW: Coercion through joint sanctions or the consideration of military means and diplomatic engagement. By proposing negotiations, Obama de-securitises the peaceful Iranian nuclear programme: He outlines Iran's right to nuclear energy, posing the Iranian leaders the choice to engage to reach a common political solution in the form of a deal. The audience, the Iranian leaders, accepted this offer, as did Congress in accepting and ratifying the JCPOA. Finally, Obama outlines Iranian compliance with the agreement, pointing out, that the issue is depoliticised. By rearticulation, proposing the joint treaty as a political solution, the issue is de-securitised according to Hansen's theoretical approach. Furthermore, by splitting the threat of the programme in peaceful (de-securitised) and military (securitised), simultaneous (de-)securitisation is enacted. The establishment of the JCPOA was thus legitimized by presenting it as a political solution, to hinder the securitised Iranian nuclear weapon and de-securitise the issue. Nevertheless, the securitisation in Obama's discourse outweighed de-securitisation, contrary to the initial assumption.

Trump's rhetoric primarily outlines the nature of the Iranian regime and the JCPOA as a threat enabling an Iranian NW, outweighing the threat of the programme itself. The Iranian leaders' ambitions threaten not only the national security of the US and Israel but also "the world". To avoid the point of no return, Iranian nuclear weapons, Trump proposes full-coercive measures: Sanctions i.e. pressure on the country, the possible use of force and the withdrawal from the JCPOA. While the treaty had been the solution to the threat in Obama's discourse, Trump re-securitises the Iranian nuclear programme alongside the deal, whose weaknesses in preventing an Iranian weapon

legitimize the United States' withdrawal from it. Trump's measures are enforced despite and because of the non-acceptance of the audience: The non-accepted call to US allies to join the path of coercion led to unilateral US sanctions while the unheard calls for Iranian compliance resulted in the JCPOA withdrawal. The abolition of the JCPOA was thus, legitimized by presenting it as a threat. Nevertheless, Trump attempted de-securitising moves towards the Iranian people and the renegotiation of the deal. The US enmity is not directed at Iranian citizens, who are a referent object of the regime and its nuclear ambitions themselves and Trump remains open to negotiating a new deal with Iran. Trump's overwhelmingly securitised discourse does not prove the hypothesis of a simultaneous (de-)securitisation, whereas the assumption of his preference to securitise is displayed.

These results provide new data for research as no study was hitherto made on the securitisation of the INP by both President Obama and President Trump. It de-constructed the President's rhetoric, outlining that Obama's concern for peace and the avoidance of NWs led to his diplomatic solution, while Trump's rhetoric displays an aversion of the Iranian regime and the scapegoat role of Iran for regional issues. Furthermore, despite the common perception of Obama and Trump having the most contrary policy approaches possible, there are similarities in their discourse such as the point of no return or the enaction of sanctions. The differences are not as insurmountable as assumed if one takes a closer look at the presidents' discourse: While Obama labels the Iranian regime as "a state sponsor of terrorism" (3/5/2012), Trump looks forward to meeting Iranian leaders (5/8/2019) - to give an extreme example.

The analysis of the present work further provides a successful empirical test for both Hansen's rearticulation and Austin/Beaulieu-Brossard's simultaneity approach. The analysis also attempts to establish a theoretical framework for tracing de-securitisation as a process in discourse. The steps identified in Obama's speeches, provide such a rudimentary framework: Accepting part of the threat (right to peaceful nuclear energy), proposing political measures to the threatening entity (choice), enforcing non-coercive measures (engagement) and outlining the abandonment of the threatening behaviour by the referent subject (compliance). This approach needs verification by further research evaluating its applicability in other case studies. The present analysis can also be enlarged and contextualised by a comparative analysis of all post-79 US

Presidents' speeches about the Iranian programme to trace the development of the discourse and their policies e.g. to assess the effectiveness of the approaches.

In everyday politics, such analysis could provide information for an Iranian leadership interested in diplomacy, as it could reply to the US' depiction of threats by e.g. signalling their willingness to comply with international rules and thus, contribute to mutual engagement. For US policy, the study provides facts to counter conservative voices claiming Obama's too soft stance towards Iran by displaying that Obama heavily securitised Iran in the name of international and domestic security. The successful de-securitisation of the nuclear programme by the joint treaty could further provide an example for future rhetorical and policy decisions, such as for the Biden administration.

In Spring 2021, diplomats are crossing the Viennese *Ringstraße* separating two prestigious hotels to deliver messages between the US and the Iranian delegation. The representatives of the two countries are not meeting face to face, but are relying on the French, German, British, Russian and Chinese delegations as intermediaries in a new round of nuclear talks (Wintour 2021). The reason for the resumed negotiations is President Joe Biden's victory at the 2020 US elections in the first place. During his electoral campaign, Biden had urged for sanctions relief on Iran in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and criticized Trump's withdrawal from the Nuclear Deal (Forgey 2020). In the first months of his presidency, Biden's ambition to re-join the deal has led to resumed talks aiming at an accord satisfying both parties, including sanctions relief for Iran and its return to the nuclear limits of the JCPOA. In the wake of Trump's withdrawal, the Iranian programme had advanced its capacity of both enrichment and uranium stockpile beyond the treaty's limits. (Wintour 2021) In a retaliatory response to an attack on the nuclear site at Natanz, blasting out its electricity supply in mid-April, presumably conducted by Israel, Iran had reached unprecedented 60% degrees of uranium enrichment, alarming the adversaries of engagement (Hafezi 2021). Despite the critical audiences both in Israel and amongst US-conservatives, the negotiations continue in the light of a looming Iranian presidential election in June that does not allow a renewed candidacy of President Rouhani. While both parties pledge to continue their talks regardless of the election result, a fruitful outcome has not yet been achieved in Vienna (Wintour 2021). Nevertheless, Biden seems to follow in Obama's footsteps and favour what already Buzan et al. (1998, p. 29) had outlined as the securitisations' preferred ultimate goal: de-securitisation.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Translation of the Introductory Quote

"Learn to ask further questions. Mistrust the simple answers. See oneself through the bird's eye. Put oneself in the shoes of the other. See the world through his*her eyes. Not because the view then gained is necessarily better or more correct. But for the sake of completeness. Who considers its worldview the only correct one, only accepts the own model of life, who feels superior to others and possibly derives privileges from his*her position, takes the path of confrontation. Respect, understanding, and a sense of proportion are the prerequisites of peaceful coexistence. Who starts breaking the thin walls of mainstream once, gets swiftly to the essentials. And often enough meets fellows."

(Original German quote by Michael Lüders, translation by the author)

8.2 Explanatory Figures[113]
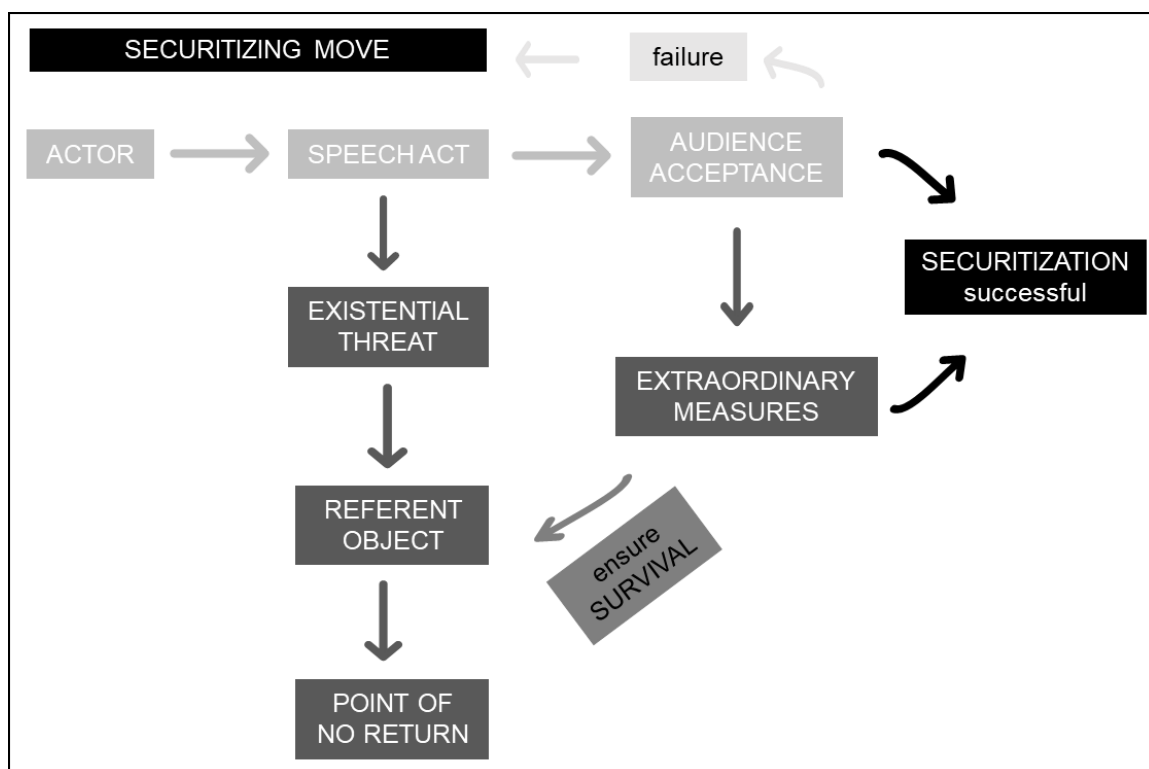
Fig. 1: The securitisation process

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[113] Note: All graphs are made by the author. Fig. 1 is based on Buzan et al.'s securitisation theory, Fig. 2-3 contain screenshots of the author's coding process in the QDA Miner, and Fig. 4-6 are retrieved in the QDA Miner using the commands "Analysis" -> "Coding frequency" -> "Search" -> "Select" -> "Items" -> "Chart selected rows".
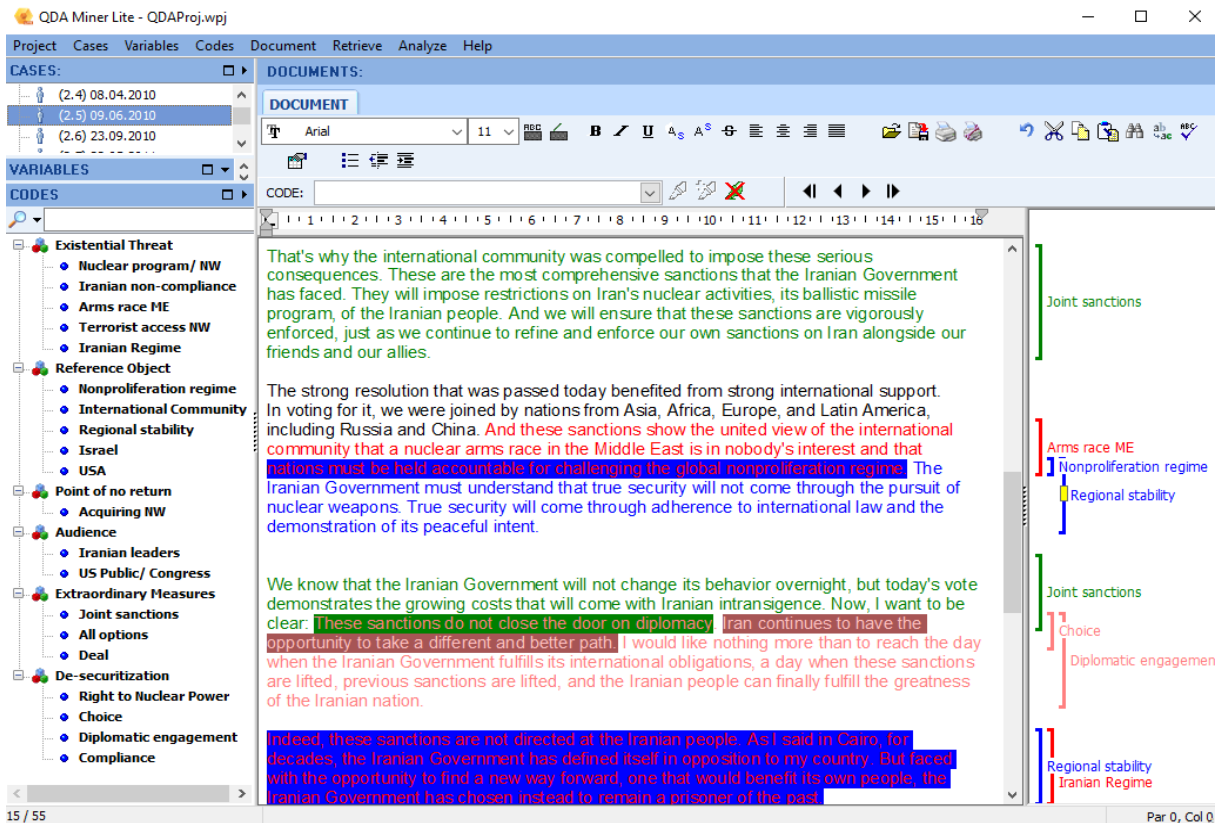
Fig. 2: The Coding process in the QDA Miner software, displaying the coding frame, the analysed text and its coded fragments, partly multiple coding (Obama 6/9/2010).
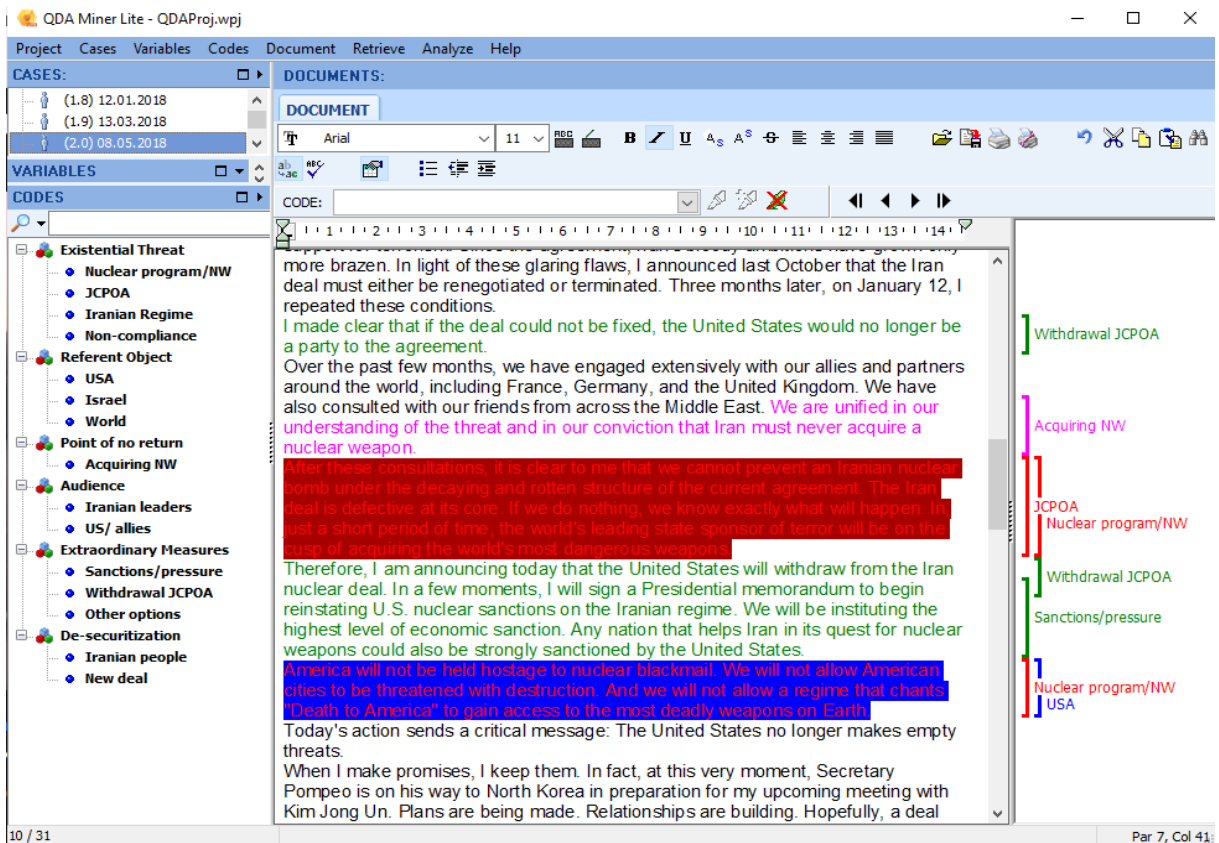

Fig. 3: The coding process, Trump's discourse (5/8/2018). The coding frame slightly differs from Obama's.
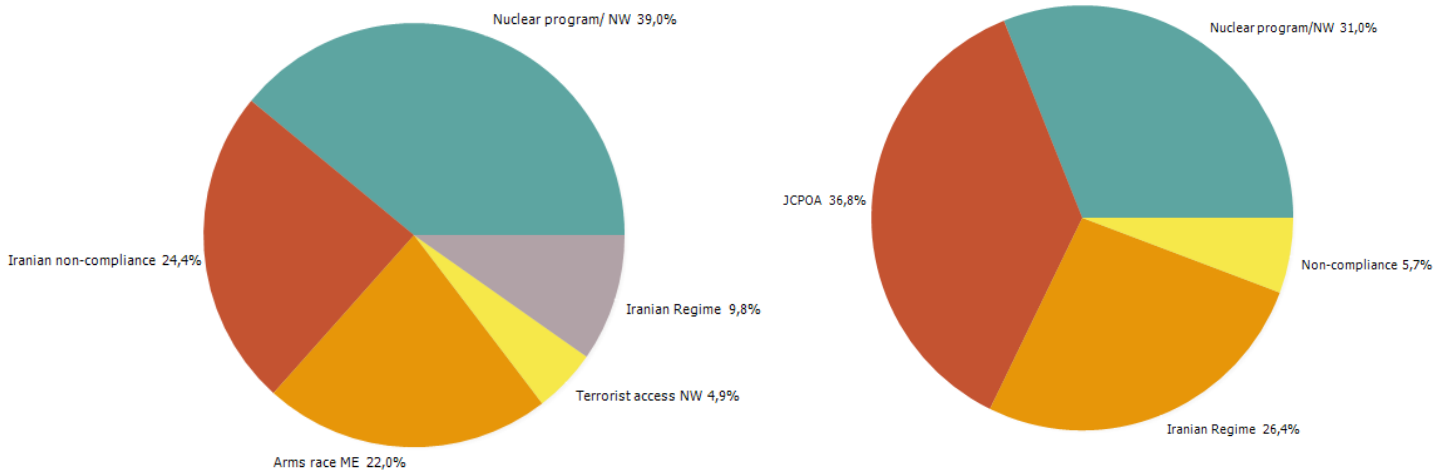
Fig. 4: Obama (l.) perceives the weaponization of the nuclear programme, a possible arms race and noncompliance in this regard as the most urgent threats. Trump (r.) securitises the JCPOA as the primary threat, outweighing the threat of the nuclear programme itself. Further, he emphasises the Iranian regime possessing nuclear weapons as a threat, hinting at the desired regime change.
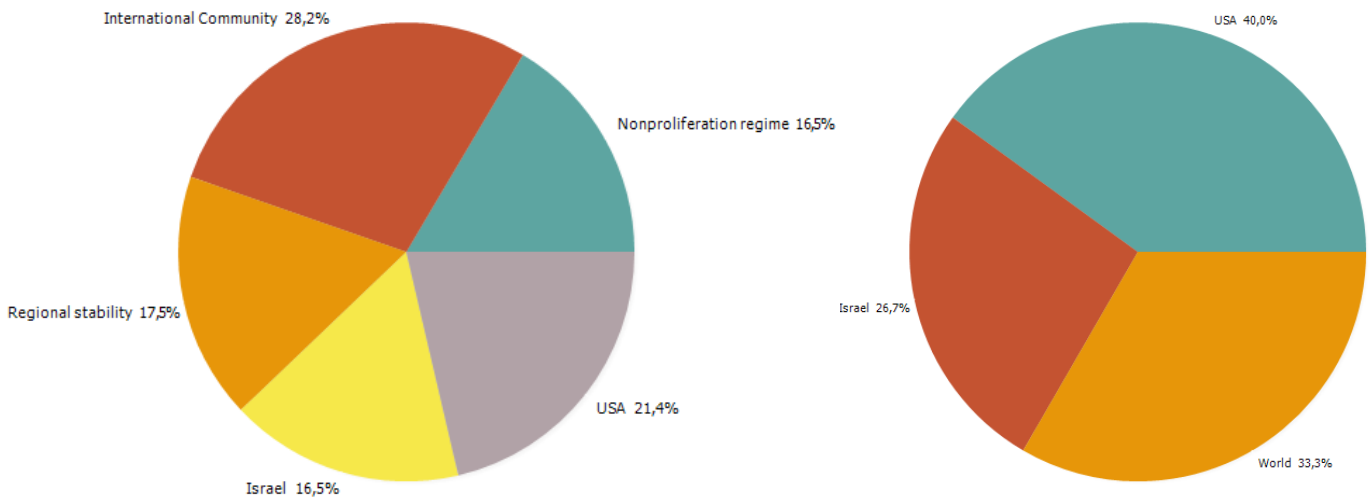

Fig. 5: Obama's referent objects (l.) are placed mostly on the international level, concerning the international community and the non-proliferation regime, while in Trump's discourse national security (both US and Israeli) plays a crucial role (r.).
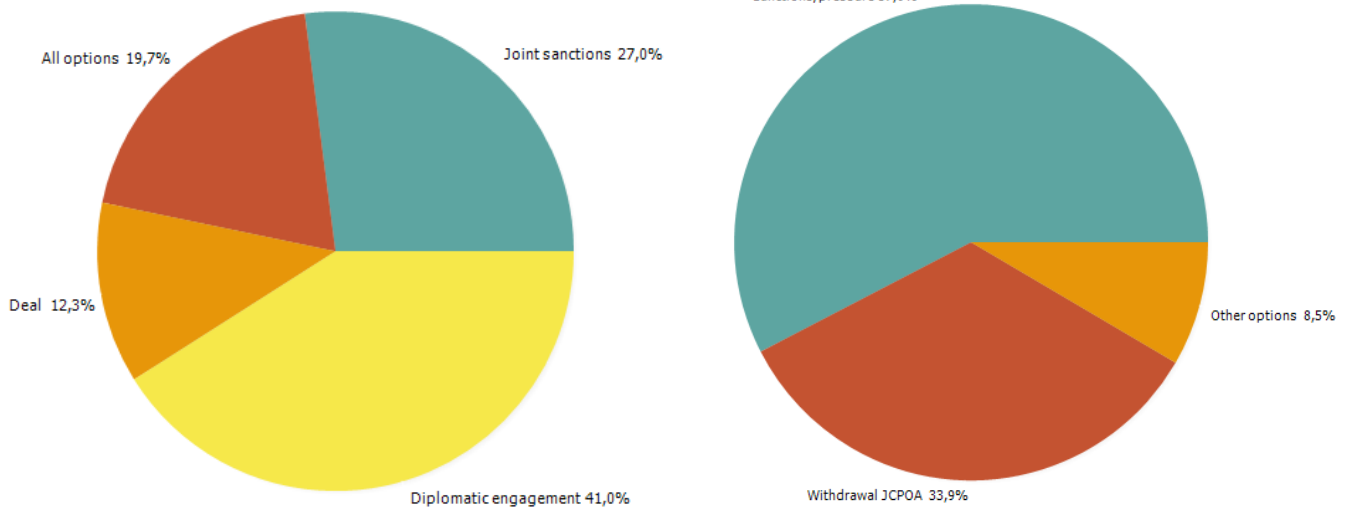
Fig. 6: Obama's will to engage diplomatically (l.), and the benefits of a joint deal narrowly outweigh coercive options in his rhetoric, displaying his dual-track policy, whereas Trump (r.) takes an all-coercive approach with sanctions, the withdrawal of the diplomatic deal and possible military options.