

The Role of Interest Groups in US Sanctions Policy Towards Iran from 2007-2016

Mirijam Koch

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Dr.rer.pol. to the Department of Political and Social Sciences at
the Freie Universität Berlin

Date of the defense: 29.04.2019

Erstgutachterin: Prof. Lora Anne Viola, Ph.D.
Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Simon Koschut

To Mira and Matthias

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Abstract

In the US political process, interest groups play an important role in shaping legislation. They provide votes and campaign contributions for political candidates but also offer important organizational support, supply information insight, and mobilize voluntary campaign staff. The increase in official lobbying spending from \$1.45 billion in 1998 to \$3.37 billion in 2017 shows the importance of lobbying in the United States. To analyze interest group involvement is, therefore, essential to a better understanding of the political processes in a democratic system. In respect to US foreign policy, many studies address the impact of interest groups and their potential to affect policy outcomes. However, the nature and the role of interest groups in shaping US foreign policy remain ambiguous. This study focuses on the potential influence of interest groups on policy decisions in US-Iranian relations. The aim of this work is to explain what changed in regard to the role of interest groups in the most significant shift in US-Iranian relations under President Barack Obama before and after the vote on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was intended to halt Iran's non-peaceful nuclear program in return for an easing of sanctions by the Congress. On 14 July 2015, the JCPOA was reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany) and incorporated into law by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. In order to avoid congressional approval, President Obama had defined the agreement as a political commitment among the nations involved instead of a treaty. However, due to congressional pressure Obama had signed a compromise bill in April, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, which enabled the legislative to review any deal with Iran before the lifting of US sanctions. To override a potential presidential veto in case of a congressional disapproval of the deal, a two-thirds majority would have been easily accomplished in the traditionally bipartisan institution in favor of a confrontational strategy towards Iran. But the debate on the JCPOA ended after a 30-day review period on 10 September 2015 with a failed vote on the resolution of disapproval of the deal in the Senate due to a Democratic filibuster; in the House of Representatives, the majority approved the same resolution, i.e. the disapproval of the deal, with an unprecedented 94% of the Democratic members in favor of the new strategy. To explain the reasons for the sudden divide by party affiliation on Iran is particularly interesting because it occurred without a change in conduct

by the Iranian regime or a strong development in US-Iranian relations. In the past, the overwhelming strength of the interest groups supporting a hawkish stance on Iran sanctions in the US Congress had been helpful in exerting pressure on legislators but was not sufficient to prevent the JCPOA. To understand what conditions changed this study presents a systematic examination of a variety of factors linked to lobbying success in US foreign policy with Iran during the times of rising US sanctions in the 110th Congress period (2007-2008) to the path towards diplomacy in the 114th Congress period (2015-2016). It is one of the very few factor-centric approaches that not only includes a variety of factors that can be linked to lobbying success but also different interest group types like ethnic lobbies, peace groups and, partly, business lobbies. This study makes two important contributions. First, since it is not a single factor alone that is responsible for policy outcomes, this study contributes to our knowledge about how structural variables, issue salience, and actor strategies work together to produce outcomes. Second, this study provides a better understanding of interest group influence by identifying conditions under which interest groups can be successful in changing the policy status quo. The tested factors also promote the development of a standardized method to investigate lobbying success. The core argument of this study is that groups support legislators with limited resources by providing expertise and assistance to pursue a common goal. In the case of US-Iranian relations, the findings of this study show that the interest groups favoring a diplomatic solution were successful for a series of reasons: their alliance with President Obama in combination with increased financial contributions and organizational strength due to the combined resources in a strong coalition, as well as assistance by the media to spread their message. All these factors in combination with favorable policy windows created by the international setting balanced out the past disadvantage of groups favoring a diplomatic solution in respect to those favoring sanctions legislation and provided opportunities to break from the status quo.

Zusammenfassung

In der US-amerikanischen Politik spielen Interessengruppen eine wichtige Rolle im Gesetzgebungsprozess. Sie bieten politischen Kandidatinnen und Kandidaten Wählerstimmen sowie Spenden, aber unterstützen auch organisatorisch, mit Fachexpertise zu bestimmten Themen und bei der Mobilisierung von freiwilligen Kampagnenhelferinnen und Kampagnenhelfern. In den USA stiegen die Lobbyausgaben nach offiziellen Angaben von \$1,45 Milliarden im Jahr 1998 auf \$3,37 Milliarden im Jahr 2017. Diese Entwicklung unterstreicht die Bedeutung von Interessengruppen als wesentlicher Bestandteil amerikanischer Politik. Trotzdem ist deren Rolle bislang nicht ausreichend erforscht, besonders in Bezug zu amerikanischer Außenpolitik. Mit der vorliegenden Studie wird der Einfluss von Interessengruppen auf das Gesetzgebungsverfahren und Gesetzesentscheidungen im Kontext der US-iranischen Beziehungen untersucht. Hier steht besonders die Untersuchung der Gründe für den signifikanten Strategiewechsel unter Präsident Barack Obama im Vordergrund, der mit dem "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA) das Ende der bisherigen Sanktionspolitik einläutete. Das Iranabkommen, das eine Lockerung der Sanktionen im Gegenzug zur Eindämmung der militärischen Dimension des iranischen Nuklearprogramms vorsah, wurde am 14. Juli 2015 zwischen dem Iran und den P5+1 (den permanenten Mitgliedern des Sicherheitsrats der Vereinten Nationen plus Deutschland) beschlossen und von den Vereinten Nationen in Kraft gesetzt. Um eine notwendige Zustimmung der Aufhebung der US-amerikanischen Sanktionen durch den Kongress zu umgehen, definierte Präsident Obama das Vertragswerk als politische Verpflichtung zwischen Nationen anstelle eines zu billigenden Vertrags. Durch den Druck des Kongresses hatte Obama im April allerdings eine Kompromissresolution unterzeichnet, die der Legislative die Möglichkeit gab, jegliche Einigung mit dem Iran zunächst überprüfen zu können. Die Abstimmung über die Anerkennung des JCPOA im September 2015 markierte das Ende einer 30-tägigen Prüfungsperiode. Ein drohendes Veto des Präsidenten im Falle einer Ablehnung des Iranabkommens zu brechen, wäre in der Vergangenheit angesichts des traditionell parteiübergreifend geschlossenen Kongresses zugunsten des Konfrontationskurses gegenüber dem Iran mühelos möglich gewesen. Stattdessen wurde eine erforderliche Zweidrittelmehrheit am 10. September 2015 weder im Senat erreicht, wo die Abstimmung durch einen demokratischen "Filibuster" scheiterte, noch im Repräsentantenhaus. Zwar stimmte hier

die Mehrheit gegen das Abkommen, allerdings befürworteten außergewöhnliche 94% der Demokraten den Kurswechsel der Regierung. Die Hintergründe für diese plötzliche Spaltung des Kongress entlang der Parteizugehörigkeit sind besonders interessant, da diese nicht mit einer signifikanten Änderung der Politik des Irans oder einer substantiellen neuen Entwicklung in den US-iranischen Beziehungen begründet werden kann. Trotz der erdrückenden finanziellen und organisatorischen Übermacht der Interessengruppen, die in der Vergangenheit erfolgreich einen harten Kurs gegen den Iran im Kongress beeinflussen konnten, konnten sie den Strategiewechsel, der mit dem JCPOA begann, nicht verhindern. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist, die veränderten Bedingungen für die involvierten Interessengruppen vor und nach der Abstimmung über das Iranabkommen im Kongress zu beleuchten. Die vorliegende Studie präsentiert eine systematische Untersuchung einer Vielzahl von Faktoren für Lobbyerfolg in Bezug zur Außenpolitik der USA gegenüber dem Iran. Sie setzt mit dem Zeitpunkt zunehmender Sanktionen in der 110. Kongressperiode (2007-2008) ein und verfolgt die Entwicklung einer diplomatischen Lösung in der 114. Kongressperiode (2015-2016). Der sonst selten angewandte faktorbedingte Ansatz berücksichtigt hier nicht nur verschiedene Faktoren, die Lobbyerfolg beeinflussen, sondern auch unterschiedliche Interessengruppentypen wie ethnische Organisationen, Friedensgruppen und, zum Teil, Unternehmen. Diese Studie leistet zwei wichtige Beiträge: Zum einen vertieft sie das Verständnis des Zusammenspiels struktureller Variablen, des politischen Kontexts und der Strategien der involvierten Akteure und deren Einfluss auf politische Entscheidungen. Zum anderen untersucht diese Arbeit die Einflussfaktoren von Interessengruppen, indem sie die Umstände aufzeigt, in denen diese Akteure erfolgreich den Status quo ändern konnten. Die getesteten Faktoren tragen auch zur Entwicklung einer standardisierten Methode bei, um Lobbyerfolg zu untersuchen. Das Hauptargument der Studie ist, dass Interessengruppen Expertise und organisatorische Unterstützung für Entscheidungsträger bieten, denen nur begrenzt Mittel zur Verfügung stehen, um so gemeinsame Ziele zu erreichen. Im Fall von US-iranischen Beziehungen zeigen die Forschungsergebnisse, dass Interessengruppen, die eine diplomatische Lösung mit dem Iran befürworteten, aufgrund einer Vielzahl an Gründen erfolgreich waren: wegen der Zusammenarbeit mit Präsident Obama in Kombination mit wachsender finanzieller und organisatorischer Stärke, durch das Bündeln von Ressourcen im Rahmen einer starken Koalition sowie durch mediale Unterstützung beim Verbreiten ihrer Position. Zusätzlich boten auch günstige internationale Umstände der zuvor eher als schwach einzustufenden Opposition neue Möglichkeiten, die

bis dato unerreichte überragende finanzielle Potenz der Sanktionsbefürworter auszugleichen und das Credo des Status quo zu durchbrechen.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I want to thank my supervisors Prof. Lora Anne Viola, Ph.D., and Prof. Dr. Simon Koschut at the Freie Universität Berlin for their immense support in writing this dissertation, in continuing to write it, and, finally, to finish it. The excellent supervision and motivation of these two people enabled me to submit this work.

Along the path of thesis-writing, I had the fortune to meet many people who contributed to my work in one way or another. I want to particularly express my deepest gratitude to: Dr. David Smith at the United States Studies Centre (USSC), University of Sydney (USYD), for the great mentoring during my stay in Australia; Dr. Chris Neff at the USYD for the best preparation before my field study in Washington, D.C., I could wish for; Dr. Rodney Taveira and Assoc. Prof. Brendon O'Connor at the USSC for enabling my research stay in Sydney and for connecting me to the right people. Prof. James McCormick, Ph.D., at the Iowa State University for the deep insight on US interest groups and the constructive feedback on my work. Prof. Andreas Dür, Ph.D., at the Universität Salzburg for taking the time to answer my questions and offering me insight into his approach of measuring interest group influence. Prof. Dr. Klaus Segbers at the Freie Universität Berlin for the improvement of my thesis by challenging my puzzle at a very early stage of my dissertation. The Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org) and MapLight for their work in structuring the financial contributions to political candidates into searchable categories.

I am deeply grateful for the anonymous participants of the invaluable interviews conducted for this work: the congressional staffers, the interest group representatives as well as the experts from think tanks, media outlets, and governmental institutions in Berlin and Washington, D.C. I enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be in Washington just before the congressional vote on the Iran nuclear deal in September 2015 and to experience the lobbying process up close within and outside the US government due to those who were willing to take time out of their incredibly busy schedules during this time.

Thanks to Ana Frost, Michael Hack, Tyson Barker, Michaela Brown, and others who provided valuable feedback and encouragement along the way. I also cannot thank enough the grammar specialists Kosol Nou, Chris Ballard, and Maria José Velasco, as well as Chana Dischereit for the bibliographical assistance.

Last but not least, I want to thank my husband Matthias for supporting me in this long and difficult journey of writing a dissertation and constantly pushing me to finish it. I am also very grateful for my parents and their continuous belief in me.

Abbreviations

ADL	Anti-Defamation League
AIPAC	American Israeli Public Affairs Committee
AJC	American Jewish Committee
APN	Americans for Peace Now
CISADA	Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act
CNAPI	Campaign for New American Policy with Iran
FCNL	Friends Committee on National Legislation
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ILSA	Iran-Libya Sanctions Act
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JFNA	Jewish Federations of North America
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NIAC	National Iranian American Council
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
PAC	Political Action Committee
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
Pro-D	Pro-Diplomacy groups
Pro-S	Pro-Sanctions groups
RJC	Republican Jewish Coalition
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle

The Role of Interest Groups in US Foreign Policy Towards Iran

For liberals, the configuration of state preferences matters most in world politics.

Moravcsik [1]

In the US political process, interest groups play an important role in shaping legislation. They provide votes and campaign contributions for political candidates but also offer important organizational support, supply information insight, and mobilize voluntary campaign staff [2, p. 1106-1107; 3, p. 97; 4, p. 153; 5, p. 152]. Each citizen has the right of political freedom in approaching legislators to raise attention to their particular interests in a pluralist society such as the United States. But if the interests of a few dominate those of the many the legitimacy of democratic accountability may be undermined [6, p. 2]. The increase in official lobbying spending from \$1.45 billion in 1998 to \$3.37 billion in 2017 shows the importance of lobbying in the United States [7]. To analyze interest group involvement is, therefore, essential to a better understanding of the political processes in a democratic system. In respect to US foreign policy, many studies address the impact of interest groups and their potential to affect policy outcomes [8, p. 161; 9, p. 755-756; 10, p. 5-6]. However, the nature and the role of interest groups in shaping US foreign policy remain ambiguous.

This study focuses on the potential influence of interest groups on policy decisions in US-Iranian relations. The aim of this work is to explain what changed in regard to the role of interest groups in the most significant shift in US-Iranian relations under President Barack Obama before

and after the vote on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was intended to halt Iran's non-peaceful nuclear program in return for an easing of sanctions by the Congress. On 14 July 2015, the JCPOA was reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany) and incorporated into law by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. In order to avoid congressional approval, President Obama had defined the agreement as a political commitment among the nations involved instead of a treaty. However, due to congressional pressure Obama had signed a compromise bill in April, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, which enabled the legislative to review any deal with Iran before the lifting of US sanctions [11]. To override a potential presidential veto in case of a congressional disapproval of the deal, a two-thirds majority would have been easily accomplished in the traditionally bipartisan institution in favor of a confrontational strategy towards Iran. But the debate on the JCPOA ended after a 30-day review period on 10 September 2015 with a failed vote on the resolution of disapproval of the deal in the Senate due to a Democratic filibuster; in the House of Representatives, the majority approved the same resolution, i.e. the disapproval of the deal, with an unprecedented 94% of the Democratic members in favor of the new strategy [12]. To explain the reasons for the sudden divide by party affiliation on Iran is particularly interesting because it occurred without a change in conduct by the Iranian regime or a strong development in US-Iranian relations. In the past, the overwhelming strength of the interest groups supporting a hawkish stance on Iran sanctions in the US Congress had been helpful in exerting pressure on legislators but was not sufficient to prevent the JCPOA. To understand what conditions changed this study presents a systematic examination of a variety of factors linked to lobbying success in US foreign policy with Iran during the times of rising US sanctions in the 110th Congress period (2007-2008) to the path towards diplomacy in the 114th Congress period (2015-2016). Lobbying success is here defined as reaching a policy outcome that is closer to the interest group's goal than it would have been without any interest group engagement [6, p. 83]. The degree of lobbying success of selected interest group was analyzed based on the policy outcomes of Iran resolutions in the House of Representatives. The selected interest groups with an important political voice in the negotiations processes with Iran were divided into two clusters: those in favor of sanctions and those in favor of diplomacy. This study presents one of the very few factor-centric approaches that not only includes a variety of factors that can be linked to lobbying success but also different interest group types like ethnic lobbies, peace

groups and, partly, business lobbies.

In spite of significant progress in past decades, systematic analyses of interest group influence in US foreign policy are rare. So far, interest group research has not been studied by many scholars due to the challenges to operationalize "influence", to develop reliable factors of analysis, and to measure these empirically [13, p. 13; 14, p. 2]. Many scholars have concentrated on a limited set of variables or single interest groups and their strategies [15, 16, 17, 18]. In particular, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) receives a lot of attention in the literature due to its financial resources, the size of its membership and history of potential lobbying success (e.g. [19, 20]).

This study makes two important contributions. First, since it is not a single factor alone that is responsible for policy outcomes, this study contributes to our knowledge about how structural variables, issue salience, and actor strategies work together to produce outcomes. Second, this study provides a better understanding of interest group influence by identifying conditions under which interest groups can be successful in changing the policy status quo. The tested factors also promote the development of a standardized method to investigate lobbying success. The core argument of this study is that groups support legislators with limited resources by providing expertise and assistance to pursue a common goal. In the case of US-Iranian relations, the findings of this study show that the interest groups favoring a diplomatic solution were successful for a series of reasons: their alliance with President Obama in combination with increased financial contributions and organizational strength due to the joining of resources in a strong coalition, as well as assistance by the media to spread their message. All these factors in combination with favorable policy windows created by the international setting balanced out the past disadvantage of the Pro-Diplomacy side to the Pro-Sanctions groups and provided opportunities to break from the status quo.

Shifting Power Relations

The nuclear deal with Iran signified a shift in US foreign policy from a strategy of confrontation and containment towards a more open diplomacy-based stance, which had long been demanded by many scholars [21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29]. As described in the literature, a change in the status quo is rare but if it occurs it is significant and happens rather

swiftly [30, p. 239-241]. The aim of this study is to explain the sudden change in US foreign policy with Iran and the partisan divide, which occurred in the formerly bipartisan Congress on Iran sanctions after the failed vote on disapproval of the JCPOA during the review period on the agreement. The central question is what role interest groups played in achieving this policy outcome and why groups favoring a diplomatic solution managed to break from the status quo despite being financially and organizationally disadvantaged. The focus of this research lies on the Congress and, in particular, on the House of Representatives, as this is an institution most disposed to interest group pressure due to the limited resources of its members and the rising costs of election campaigns aggravated by the short two-year term.

Before the JCPOA interest groups favoring sanctions legislation in regard to Iran used to only defend the status quo without having to fear a strong opposition from competing groups. Around 95% of all recorded votes in the House of Representatives on Iran sanctions legislation between the 110th-113th Congress periods were "Yea"-votes. These dropped to 59% in the 114th Congress period, including 99% of Republican votes. When Barack Obama became president in 2009, he pushed for a strategy of diplomatic measures towards Iran. Instead of following the policy of his predecessor President George W. Bush, he aimed to limit US military involvement abroad and propagated cooperation between nations instead of domination [31]. With this change in the administration, the interest groups in favor of diplomacy had a strong ally who relied on their expertise and assistance in convincing the legislative branch to break from the status quo. The international context supported this change with the engagement of the international community in the P5+1 talks and the 2013 election of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani who had campaigned for improved economic conditions and was eager to reach an agreement with the international community. Congress, previously united around the notion of sanctions, divided along partisan lines setting the stage for conditions favoring greater diplomacy. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's handling of relations with Washington contributed to this new polarization. In 2012, he endorsed Republican candidate Mitt Romney for president and, in a visit uncoordinated with the White House, spoke before a joint session of Congress warning of the potential threat of an agreement with Iran months before its official announcement in 2015. The Israeli government's involvement also negatively impacted the bipartisanship of AIPAC, the Pro-Sanctions groups' most influential player in US foreign policy, and a close ally of Netanyahu's Likud party. Even as divisions within AIPAC widened, J Street, another powerful fi-

nancial and organizational actor in Middle East policy, switched to the Pro-Diplomacy side tilting the balance even more away from the Pro-Sanctions side. As a major Jewish group with credibility throughout the American Jewish community, J Street also provided political cover for the Democratic members to vote for the deal with Iran without fearing to be labeled as anti-Semitic or being against Israel. This was, in particular, important given President Obama's unpopularity at the time. Obama alone might have not been able to convince his party to support the deal [32].

It can be said that the success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups relied to a high degree on a changed equilibrium, which turned them into serious competitors to the Pro-Sanctions side due to their close cooperation with the president, combined resources in a coalition of over 85 organizations and 200 individuals evoked by the Ploughshares Fund¹, and the high level of media visibility at the time, which helped to promote their message.

A Brief Historical Background on US Involvement in Iran

The signing of the JCPOA becomes even more significant due to the complicated and sometimes openly hostile relations between the "great Satan" and the "mad mullahs" in the past [34, p. 212-215]. The relationship between the two countries had changed from the strong cooperation between the Iranian regime and the United States under Mohammed Reza Shah to a diplomatic ice age after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power in 1979, which started with the hostage taking of more than 50 American citizens in the US Embassy in Tehran. After over 30 years, official diplomatic relations were taken up again when the Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif met his counterpart US Secretary of State John Kelly in 2013 to find a solution for the conflict over Iran's nuclear program, whose foundations date back to President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program in 1957 [35, 36].

Ever since Ayatollah Khomeini saw the need to restart the nuclear program for economic reasons in 1981 during the Iran-Iraq War, Iran's nu-

¹For a full list of the organizations see the Annual Report of the Ploughshares Fund [33].

clear ambitions had been a growing source of conflict in US-Iranian relations [37]. During the war, the United States had officially supported Iraq while secretly delivering weapons to Iran in order to ensure that neither of the two countries would gain the upper hand in the regional power struggle [38, p. 177]. After the military involvement of the United States in the 1990-1991 Gulf War with Iraq, the power balance turned in Iran's favor, which was perceived as a threat to Israeli interests. Israel reacted by ending the so-called periphery doctrine, a strategy of strong cooperation with Iran, which had been an unofficial response to the pan-Arab threat in light of Egyptian and Iraqi aggression [39, p. 362-636]. Instead, Israel reached out to settle the conflict with the Palestinians and struck a peace agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993. This, in turn, implied a major security threat to Iran as it entailed the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab regimes as well as regional powers like China and India. Therefore, Iran started supporting the Palestinian group Hamas, who opposed the peace deal [40, p. 29-32]. As a consequence, the Pro-Israel groups in the United States, mostly AIPAC, aimed to brand Iran as rogue state and a sponsor of terrorism. Martin Indyk, former deputy research director of AIPAC and director of the Washington Institute for Near East, which was founded with the backing of the lobby, strongly advocated for keeping Iran in check [41, p. 62-63]. As a senior advisor for the Middle East at the National Security Council under President Bill Clinton in 1993, Indyk announced the administration's strategy of dual containment at the Washington Institute for Near East a couple of months into Clinton's term. The strategy was designed to keep both Iraq and Iran in check with a combination of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation [42, p. 55]. Under the Clinton administration the suspicions rose that Iran might pursue a nuclear weapon, which led to an increase in unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic. Israel and AIPAC's lobbying played an important role in blocking an investment deal of the American oil firm Conoco in an Iranian oil field. AIPAC further lobbied Congress to stop US companies from doing business with Iran based on the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (ILSA), which was part of a strategy to tightening sanctions against Iran [39, p. 363]. The former AIPAC lobbyist Keith Weissman as well as the former State Department official for Near East Affairs David Welch confirmed that ILSA was a product of AIPAC's lobbying efforts and that the bill was signed into law despite opposition from the White House. [43; 42, p. 139-140].

Under President George W. Bush diplomatic relations with Iran improved at first, as the attacks of 11 September 2001 led to a wave of

solidarity between the two countries in the face of Sunni extremist terrorism. With the "Operation Enduring Freedom" the United States sought to avenge the attacks and take out Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. The Iranian regime under President Mohammad Khatami was involved in the operation. It had been the primary supporter of the Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban force Iran had sponsored throughout the 1990s. Apart from mediating between the Northern Alliance and the United States, Iran offered its airbases to US fighter planes, helped rescue US soldiers, and attacked fleeing Al Qaida leaders [40, p. 40-42]. Iran also became an important mediator for the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan in 2001. After President Bush labeled Iran, and North Korea as part of an axis of evil in the State of the Union speech in January 2002, the Iranian regime was shocked and further regional cooperation ceased [44, p. 309-311]. In the same year, clandestine nuclear facilities and a heavy water facility were discovered in the Iranian towns of Natanz and Arak [45]. This discovery together with the general power balance between Sunni Iraq and Shia Iran tilted towards the latter after the 2003 Iraq war, raised the level of alertness in Arab states and Israel. After the invasion of Iraq by American troops the Iranian regime feared another US military offensive, this time on its soil. Potentially out of precaution, Tehran sent a proposal to the Bush administration with the offer to end its sponsoring of Hamas and Hezbollah and to put its nuclear program completely under international control. Iran would also accept a Saudi peace plan of 2002 including the recognition of Israel but only when Israel was to return the occupied territories and accept an independent Palestine [46, p. 218-219]. In return, the Iranian regime asked for the establishment of better relations with the United States, an end to hostile behavior and sanctions, the acceptance of Iran's national security interests in the region as well as former war reparation demands [47; 40, p. 49]. Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage, understood this proposal as an opportunity for improved US-Iranian relations, while Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld saw the proposal as a sign of regime weakness, offering the chance of possible regime change. In the end, the proposal was ignored, according to former Bush administration officials a mistake [46, p. 219; 40, p. 51]. In 2006, Iran stopped cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). A year later, Iran had produced fissile material capable of building 10-12 nuclear bombs as the number of its centrifuges rose from a few hundred to 19,000. In addition, it gained the ability to produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale [48].

Shortly after his inauguration in 2009, President Obama made clear that

he wanted a change in US relations with Iran. His vision of a different strategy might have been influenced by a 2006 report of the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan congressional commission, which called for the re-establishing of diplomatic relations with Iran as one of the recommendations for peace and stability in the Middle East. Many of the inner circle of the Obama administration, for example, Ben Rhodes, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting, were involved in writing the report [31]. However, President Obama's outreach to the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei did not immediately elicit a reaction. Due to the discovery of a secret Uranium enrichment facility later that year a sanctions regime including cyber attacks via malware such as Stuxnet and Flame was established to pressure the Iranians into negotiations. While bilateral talks between the United States and Iran had already paved the way for an agreement since 2012, multilateral talks started afresh with the 2013 election of President Hassan Rouhani who sought to repair Iran's economy after years of economic isolation and internal mismanagement. Before the end of the year the P5+1 and Iran reached an Interim Agreement. In 2014, Iran trained and equipped tens of thousands of volunteers who joined Shiite militias to counter the initial ISIS advance of Sunni jihadists, which proved Iran's regional importance. Despite or because of the developments in the Middle East, Israeli agitation against a deal with Iran grew. Some forces in Israel perceived a détente with Iran could lead to an alliance between the Shia state and the United States and, thereby, weaken Israeli interests [49]. The urgency of this matter is illustrated in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's involvement in US domestic politics with his speech in front of a joint session of Congress in the beginning of 2015 warning of a potential agreement with Iran. The JCPOA was officially announced in July 2015, and the end of a 30-day congressional review period of the deal revealed an unprecedented majority of Democratic members supporting the strategy change.

With President Donald Trump announcing the US withdrawal from the Iran deal in May 2018, the United States underestimated the benefits of cooperation with Iran in respect to a reinforcement of stability in the Middle East as well as the need for a future cooperation between the two countries [50]. Iran's importance as a major regional player is reflected in its support of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, the Assad regime in Syria, the Shiite militias in Iraq, and to a declining degree of Hamas in Palestine. Iran's weight as regional power also rests upon its oil and gas reserves with its fourth largest oil and second largest gas deposits in the world [51]. In addition, Iran's geopolitical significance

lies in its borders to Central Asia and its access to the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, where over 50% of the world's oil and more than 40% of the world's gas reserves are concentrated [52]. The turbulent relations between the United States and Iran have seen many different stages, which have ranged from alliance, confrontation, containment, and cooperation. Explaining the impact of US domestic actors behind the shift towards diplomatic relations is at the center of this work.

Research Design

Coming from a liberal approach this study focuses on the domestic structures and internal groups as the origins of US foreign policy . In contrast to realism, which views the state as a unitary actor, liberalism sees the state as a summary of diverging interests [1, p. 10-11]. "For liberals, the configuration of state preferences matters most in world politics – not, as realists argue, the configuration of capabilities and not, as institutionalists [...] maintain, the configuration of information and institutions" [1, p. 513]. Domestic actors give essential insight into US foreign policy-making [53, p. 1515; 54, p. 9]. When geopolitics and national security interests give way to the pressure of powerful domestic interests understanding the impact of interest groups is of utmost importance to gain profound knowledge about the functioning of democracies [55, p. 6-7]. To analyze the role of interest groups in the policy decisions in US-Iranian relations this study focused on the coalition-building processes between the national actors as well as the interdependence of domestic and foreign policy [56, p. 480-488; 2, p. 1104]. This interdependence is best described as a "two-level game" where legislators act within the framework of domestic restraints and external conditions in regard to making foreign policy decisions [57, p. 434]. In addition, the research focuses on the reliance of resource-strained legislators on the support of interest groups as legislative subsidy in the pursuit of a mutual goal [58, p. 990-991]. The central question of this study is how lobbying success affects policies as this comes closest to understanding why interest groups fail or succeed and under which circumstances [59]. The focus of this factor-centric research design lies in analyzing what contributed to the lobbying success of interest groups with respect to US-Iranian relations. The conditions contributing to lobbying success are internal, i.e. interest group characteristics as the agent, and external, i.e. the domestic and international context as the structure. Before the conditions are presented

in more detail, first the selection process of interest groups in this study is explained.

The Selection of Interest Groups

The interest groups studied in this dissertation were selected based on the importance of their political voice, meaning that these groups interacted with policymakers on issues related to Iran and were involved in the political process. The relevance of interest groups derived from their degree of lobbying activity coupled with a minimum amount of financial contributions to political candidates. Both are disclosed in the lobby reports entailing the keyword "Iran" submitted to the Lobbying Disclosure Act Database provided by the US Senate. Relevant interest groups had to submit a minimum of four lobby reports at least twice between the 110th-113th Congress periods (2007-2014). In addition, the interest groups' lobby expenditures had to exceed \$20,000 in at least two out of four periods during the selected timeframe. Setting the expenditures at this amount excluded financially weaker organizations to only concentrate on the most important groups.

The interest groups were divided into two clusters: in favor of sanctions (Pro-Sanctions groups) and in favor of diplomacy (Pro-Diplomacy groups). The interest groups favoring a more confrontational strategy included ACT! for America, American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), American Jewish Committee (AJC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Bipartisan Policy Center Advocacy Network, Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), and the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC). Those favoring diplomatic measures were Americans for Peace Now (APN), Center for Arms Control & Non-Proliferation, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and the National Foreign Trade Council Inc. The group J Street supported Iran sanctions until the 113th Congress period and then rallied for the JCPOA in the 114th Congress period. This is why the group was initially categorized as Pro-Sanctions and later as Pro-Diplomacy. Because of its multifaceted standing on Iran, J Street was analyzed separately in regard to their financial contributions, which will be thoroughly explained in the second chapter. Businesses were mostly excluded in the analysis because of the lack of transparency in regard to the required data. The second chapter explains this in detail and also includes an overview of the discussed interest groups.

The Variables and Factors Selected

The degree of lobbying success of the two interest group clusters, i.e. the Pro-Sanctions side and the Pro-Diplomacy side, was analyzed based on the policy outcomes of Iran resolutions in the House of Representatives. The resolutions for this study were chosen based on their content related to sanctions legislation or diplomatic engagement with Iran introduced in the 110th-114th Congress. The total number of resolutions includes 69 resolutions, out of these there are 16 with registered votes (roll calls), and 53 resolutions without votes (dead resolutions).

The *dependent variable* is the policy outcome, which was qualitatively measured by variation in legislation outcome, i.e. the voting behavior as accounted for in recorded roll calls or in the number of resolutions introduced concerning Iran as registered on the official website of the US Congress. Lobbying success was measured by comparing the goals of selected interest groups to the voting behavior of legislators or to the number of Iran resolutions introduced. The *independent variables* are factors derived from the literature studying lobbying success. Factors linked to lobbying success were sorted into two different categories: the inside factors, which derived from the *characteristics of interest groups*, and the outside factors, which stemmed from the *domestic and international political context*. This study sought to analyze which of these factors contributed to the lobbying success of interest groups. The factors for the category interest group characteristics consist of *financial contributions, district representation, access, coalition-building, and organizational strength*. The factors belonging to the category domestic and international political context involve potential influences from the outside, structural conditions that created openings for interest groups to be successful. These factors consist of the *media attention, public opinion, presidential support, and policy windows*. The factors are described and operationalized in detail in the second chapter.

Both categories are essential to understand lobbying success and the causes for policy change as many factors are interconnected. In addition, interviews with interest group representatives and congressional staff served to draw a more comprehensive picture of the factors associated with lobbying success. Existing bias of the questioned individuals or groups, however, limited the use of the interview results to the provision of background information and the supplementation of the tested factors. Additional interviews with Iran experts on US-Iranian relations verified the selection of chosen cases as well as the interest groups involved and

contributed valuable insight information. The combination of empirical data collected for the inside and outside factors together with the control interviews ensured the best insight into the policymaking process as possible based on the available data and enabled a thorough investigation of lobbying success in US foreign policy with Iran.

Data and Methods Used

The research was based upon process tracing via an in-depth qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources as published by interest groups, the media, and the government (Law Library of Congress: congressional hearing transcripts, text of amendments, relevant sections of bills, testimony in hearings, speeches on the floor of the House). Process tracing is the most suitable method for measuring and testing hypotheses and to investigate causal mechanisms [60, p. 261]. It enabled the examination of the contribution of interest groups to the policymaking process and investigated the correlation of a variety of factors to the policy outcome by means of a "soaking and poking" assessment [61, p. 884].

Interviews were conducted with fifteen congressional staffers and six interest group representatives involved in the policymaking process of relevant Iran resolutions. Additional interviews with Iran experts from governmental institutions, think tanks as well as a media outlet enabled insight into the issue context and clarified important points, which might have stayed undiscovered by document analysis alone. Interviews were structured to ensure that the interviewees all faced the same questions, which enabled the comparison of the interviews. Interviews were not limited to the questions asked in order to benefit from the perspective of an insider [62, p. 665].

The main challenges for researching the conditions of lobbying success lay in the limited data availability for some of the factors of this study. The lack of transparency in which interest groups operate was most evident in the factors money, access, and district representation, which is discussed in detail in the second chapter.

Structure of this Work

The first chapter discusses the political system of the United States as the basis for involvement of interest groups due to the decentralized policymaking structure, limited importance of political parties, the electoral system, and the implications of the rising polarization within the American society. After a historical explanation of the increase in lobbying and the success of interest groups follows a literature review on the characteristics of interest group strategies, interest group types and access points in the government. The chapter concludes with the theoretical background of the previously mentioned factors linked to lobbying success.

The second chapter describes the research design, the selected cases, and analyzes the empirical data for factors related to lobbying success. Nine hypotheses are presented including their respective operationalization and analysis. The final assessment of all nine analyzed factors includes a comparison with the theoretical assumptions. The most relevant factors for lobbying success are identified as coalition-building, organizational strength, financial contributions, media attention, the support of the president, and policy windows.

In the third chapter, a timeline of the events leading to the JCPOA from 2007-2016 is presented including presidential and congressional initiatives, measures by the Iranian regime, and the involvement of the international community. Based on the historical development, the equilibrium of interest groups changed, which resulted in an increase in strength of the Pro-Diplomacy groups. The reasons for this shift in power are explained in detail in context with the domestic and international events, the interview results, and the factors confirmed by the empirical data.

The concluding chapter assesses how the results of this study contribute to interest group literature as well as to theory-building, based on the study's answer to the question when and if interest groups are successful. The chapter closes with an overview of the current and upcoming developments with respect to US foreign policy towards Iran.

Chapter 1

The Dynamics of Foreign Policymaking in the United States

Interest groups are no less a
threat than an expression of
freedom.

Berry [63]

The pluralist system of the United States laid the groundwork of interest group involvement based on its decentralized policymaking structure, the limited importance of political parties, and the electoral system including the implications of the rising polarization within the American society. After a historical overview of the rise in importance of the US Congress in relation to the president and the ensuing increase in interest group involvement, the different interest group types, strategies as well as important access points are described. The chapter concludes with an outline of the most relevant factors linked to lobbying success, which serves as the theoretical foundation of the empirical data analysis in the following chapter.

1.1 Institutional Changes and Growing Interest Group Importance

When looking at US foreign policy the role of interest groups has significantly changed over the decades. This change is strongly connected to the development of the US Congress as a powerful institution in regard to foreign policy issues and its accessibility to interest groups.

Traditionally, the president has been the central actor in recommending and proposing legislation. During World War II the national security apparatus significantly strengthened and the president became the ultimate authority [64, p. 296]. With the beginning of the Cold War, the term "imperial presidency" was used to describe the role of the president. The threat of a Soviet invasion empowered the president to make important foreign policy decisions without previous consultation of the Congress [65, p. 434]. The endurance of the Cold War, the unpopular Vietnam War, and President Richard Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal fostered the public's distrust in an unquestioned presidential leadership, which encouraged congressional members from both parties to promote the legislative as an institution for the people. The 1960s and 1970s brought about congressional reforms, which led to a diminished power of the committee chairs in return for more independent subcommittees and, subsequently, more independent legislators [5, p. 39]. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 and the recording of congressional votes increased the transparency of Congress to the public. In addition, the use of primary elections and grassroots activism increased the responsiveness of the office holders to their constituencies rather than to the party leadership. To be successful political candidates had to become attractive for voters and raise funds, often, with the help of political action committees (PACs). Once in office, the candidates were very conscious of the wishes of their constituency, which also influenced the committee they sought a position for. The reforms led to smaller committees, which facilitated lobbying due to the cultivation of personal relationships. More resources for subcommittees, including their chairs and ranking members, as well as an increasing number of congressional staff, together with an expansion of the Congressional Research Service, enabled Congress to act more autonomously from the executive branch, and above all, be more responsive to the public [66, p. xiii; 6, p. 141; 67, p. 8; 68, p. 15; 69, p. 20].

On several occasions, the increased power of Congress was evident by

confrontations with the executive as shown by the abolishment of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1970, which forced President Lyndon B. Johnson to consult Congress before any further decisions regarding Vietnam and the overriding of President Nixon's veto in the War Powers Resolution of 1973, that forced the president to consult Congress within 48 hours after sending troops into potentially hostile situations. Further weakening the executive in favor of Congress was the forced resignation of President Nixon in 1974 after the Watergate scandal and the withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975. In addition, Congress refused funds for the Defense Department and the CIA in 1982, which were to be used for the overthrow of Nicaragua's government [66, p. xiii; 70, p. 91; 65, p. 435].

After the failed strategy of US involvement in Vietnam and the end of the Cold War, the bipolar world order, which had legitimized the "imperial presidency", fell apart without a unifying threat and was replaced by a multipolar international environment. In this new setting, economic and ethnic interests began to dominate policy decisions, which was encouraged by the increase of access points for interest groups [71, p.116]. The former reliance on presidential decisions was exchanged for a higher number of congressional staff that served the members as experts, and dominant committees were swapped for partisan disputes and ideological polarization. The growing decentralization of decisionmaking, the higher involvement of Congress members in foreign policy issues, together with the lack of a coherent foreign policy strategy in favor of single-issue politics, the focus on trade, and the stronger dependence of elected officials on their constituency led to a domestication of US foreign policy, which increased the importance of Congress and the need for coalition-building within and outside the political institutions [66, p. xiv; 72, p. 9-15; 73, p. 343-345; 74, p. 6-7; 69, p. 20-21; 75, p. 229]. This development left majority building not only up to party affiliation but also to ideological dependencies and opened the door to societal demands, which turned interest groups into an essential player within the foreign policy decisionmaking process [76, p. 6; 5, p. 47-49; 74, p. 6-7; 77, p. 202-203; 71, p.103-104; 72, p. 8; 78, p. 12-14; 79, p. 37-40; 80, p. 41-42; 70, p. 93].

Today, Congress is provided with important powers such as the required consent of the Senate for treaties as well as the authorization of funds and trade policies by both chambers of Congress including the rarely invoked power to declare war based on the War Powers Resolution [81, p. 20]. However, the scope of congressional power is limited by the president's power to veto laws [82, p. 254; 75, p. 231; 70, p. 93-95; 80, p. 32; 83, p.

9; 84, p. 28]. The president remains the most important decisionmaker, in particular, in regard to foreign policy and defense strategies, and, furthermore, during crises. As commander in chief of the armed forces the president sometimes acts unilaterally in regard to military actions asking for congressional authorization only after they were imposed [81, p. 19]. The "Rally 'Round the Flag" effect additionally supports the president during times of crises. For example, during the first Gulf War and after the September 11, 2001, attacks presidential power won over congressional power [64, p.303]. The most potent tool of the president is the ability to unilaterally issue executive orders [85, 4-5]. The president can also request legislation to be introduced in Congress, which tends to be more successful than congressional initiatives [81, p. 17-78]. However, as congressional members can also collectively vote against a presidential policy or hinder and redirect a policy by individual members or single committees, the president becomes only one lobbyist in the constant negotiation processes between congressional members, the Senate and the House of Representative. When presidential power is low Congress can best influence, shape and determine the foreign policy decisionmaking process [68, p. 3-6; 69, p. 21; 74, p. 5; 81, p. 32]. Due to limited resources legislators often rely on interest groups to pursue a mutual goal within these processes [58, p. 991].

1.2 Legitimate Interest Representation or Democratic Threat

Regarding the influence of interest groups, the nature of the political system defines the way they are involved in the decisionmaking process [18, 86]. The pluralistic American political system was meant to be open to all groups of people, which originates back to the fourth president of the United States, James Madison. His idea was that politically engaged groups would equally compete for influence in the decisionmaking process so that power was to be divided naturally. President James Madison feared the potential faction building, which would endanger the general good. To avoid majority rule his concept of the constitution provided for checks and balances of the legislative power, the executive power, and the judicial power. This system was supposed to keep diverging interests and power structures at bay [87; 88, p. 7-8]. However, Alan J. Cigler argued that this pluralistic concept of the US political system is more open to interest group development than the will of the majority [89, p. 5].

Arthur F. Bentley emphasized that the domination of economic interests in the political system turned the state and law to simple representatives of different groups [90, p. 24-46]. David Truman broadened that concept to the general domination of interest groups but underlined the natural balance of power between competing groups in the policymaking process [91]. Next to interest groups, Robert A. Dahl included political parties, legislators, government agencies as important actors in the policymaking process [92, p. 120-130]. Mancur Olson criticized this diversity of important actors and claimed that only the few rule the many because those representing the public good would always invest more than they actually benefit [93]. This view was supported by Elmer E. Schattschneider who called the pluralist nature of the American political system a myth, in which only upper-class groups were able to participate with a focus on dominant business groups [94, p. 35].

The involvement of the government started to grow with the change from an agrarian nation to an industrially and technologically advanced society, combined with extraordinary territorial growth [5, p. 150]. Constitutional rights, such as the freedom of speech and press as well as the freedom of assembly encouraged the growing number and participation of interest groups [5, p. 150]. The centralization of interest group headquarters in Washington, D.C., bundled interest group activity and made it more efficient. Major technological developments also facilitated lobbying, in particular through the introduction of the Internet. High and heterogeneous immigration resulted in a society with various ethnic and national backgrounds, which led to the competition of various foreign policy concerns [89, p. 1-2; 70, p. 1-2]. Next to the pluralistic nature of the United States there are several factors that explain why the American nation has particularly been open to interest group influence.

1. *The decentralized policymaking structure:* The political system of the United States provides many access points to interest groups. The legislature, executive, and judiciary, but also independent regulatory commissions, national and state governmental bodies, as well as local authorities provide access points in the political decisionmaking process. In foreign policy issues, interest groups evidently concentrate on the Defense and State Departments as well as members of Congress who are influential regarding their respective concerns in the House or Senate. The system of public office nominations via primaries instead of the party leadership makes political candidates highly responsive to their constituents, and,

therefore, to interest groups [70, p. 93].

2. *Limited importance of political parties*: In the presidential system of the United States, the president as the executive and Congress as the legislative have their own electoral mandates. This lessens the importance of political parties because the whole structure of the government does not solely depend on party stability, in contrast to parliamentary systems. In the United States political parties have only limited ability to raise money, which signifies that candidates have to fend for themselves, but also that they act to a certain degree independently from the party [89, p. 20; 63, p. 47; 5, p. 151]. The dependence of policymakers on financial contributions makes them very vulnerable to interest group pressure.
3. *The US electoral system*: The majoritarian rule for both presidential and congressional elections signifies that a majority can be reached with relatively few votes. With low voter turnout rates of an average of 55.4% from 2000-2016 the mobilization of votes by interest groups becomes all the more important [95]. With re-elections due every two years for all 435 members of the House and a third of the members of the Senate, the members of Congress heavily depend on their electorate [84, p. 21-22; 71, p. 103-106].

Summing up, the rights of the people, the federalist structure and the system of checks and balances, built the foundation for the pluralistic nature of the US policymaking process. "The decentralized, open and democratic nature of the American political system and its shared authority between the legislative and executive branches – in short the 'weakness' of the American state – provides interest groups with routes of access and means for influence which might not be available in a more hierarchical system." [75, p. 229]. As Dahl [92, p. 145] puts it: "The 'normal' American political process is one in which there is a high probability that an active and legitimate group in the population can make itself heard effectively at some crucial stage in the process of decision." Critics argue that the decentralized policymaking structure of the United States gave interest groups enough space to operate within as well as outside of the political system [56, p. 484; 84, p. 26]. Over the last decade, the increase of polarization within society and the political world has led to a rise in the alliances between parties and interest groups. "[...] Most [interest groups] have discovered that the fate of their agendas depends on which party controls Congress and the White House." [96]. The rising partisanship of interest groups strengthened their impact on legislators, as they became part of political networks, but also limited their ability to work with both sides of the aisle. The polarization of the formerly united

Congress in favor of Iran sanctions legislation enabled a break from the status quo for the Pro-Diplomacy groups in respect to the vote on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

1.3 Restricting Interest Group Influence

In regard to foreign policy, interest groups start to turn into a threat as soon as the interests of a minority dominate national interests [84, p. 4-5; 97, p. 30]. There have been several attempts to control interest group activities. Foreign lobbies need to register officially as stated in the Federal Agents Registration Act in 1938 and, since 1946, interest groups have to quarterly register lobby representatives in Congress, according to the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act. However, its vagueness left many loopholes: for example, this act only required the registration of those interest group representatives working exclusively as lobbyists [98, p. 32-33]. Through changes in campaign finance laws with the Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments of 1974, interest groups were able to make financial contributions to political candidates, which had been forbidden before. The Lobbying and Disclosure Act of 1995 included the need to register lobby representatives for interest groups whose advocacy activities were limited to less than 20% [99, p. 5], but left out grassroots lobbying. Further legislation expanded the act, such as the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act of 2006 and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, which strengthened public disclosure of lobbying activities and funding, as well as enforced gift restrictions and penalties [100]. In 2009, President Barack Obama issued an executive order blocking registered lobbyists from taking administration jobs and prohibiting administration officials to contact their former employers for two years after they left their positions. President Donald Trump revoked the order in 2017, and while he raised the lobbying ban to five years after leaving a governmental position, he opened up the opportunity to lobby other parts of the government. In addition, President Trump decreased the contact ban to one year for 3,000 positions [101]. These rather weak federal control mechanisms can be explained by the important function of lobbying "in representative systems where public opinion is often too inchoate, and the political parties too heterogeneous, for legislators to be fully informed through these mechanisms alone. Given the informational value of lobbying to incumbent representatives, it is understandable that Congress has demonstrated little interest in regulating lobbying activity over the years." [101, p. 245]. The actual lobbying activity can vary from

one interest group type to another and depends on the strategy a group pursues. The various interest group types and their different strategies are examined as follows.

1.4 The Differences in Interest Group Types

The group type is an important element that is connected to the later discussed lobbying techniques [102, 103, 104, 105]. This study mostly compares non-profit organizations or 501(c)(3)/(4) organizations. For organizations registered as 501(c)(3), the lobbying expenditures are limited to 10-20% of their total amount in order to keep their status of being tax-exempt and to offer tax-deductible contributions. As they are not allowed to directly sponsor political campaigns of individual candidates they can indirectly finance campaigns through the founding of political actions committees (PACs), Super PACs, 527 organizations or by mobilizing volunteers [72, p. 10-13; 88, p. 60; 59, p. 36]. 501(c)(4) organizations also have to primarily work for social welfare but as their lobbying activities are not tax-exempt they are only limited to up to 50% of the overall activities. These organizations can directly support political candidates by forming PACs, corporations, associations, or other organizations. PACs enable interest groups to donate up to \$5,000 per election phase. Super PACs can raise and spend an unlimited amount of money on political campaigns but not on individual candidates, and they must disclose their donors. Another means of lobbying is the founding of a 527 organization, which can run political advertisement campaigns sponsored by an unlimited amount of individual and corporate contributions with the obligation to disclose its donors [7]. As discussed in the next chapter, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) formed the 501(c)(4) organization Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran in the fight against the Iran deal in order to run an extensive advertisement campaign.

Particularly important for this study is that business groups behave differently than citizen groups and non-profit organizations. The former tends to focus on inside lobbying, the latter on outside lobbying [106, 105, 107]. These two strategies are discussed in detail in the following section. In regard to Iran, business groups relied on inside lobbying and financial resources to shape legislation without raising public awareness, as they could not risk their own trading interests to appear to stand over national security concerns with Iran. Concerning citizen groups and

non-profit organizations, these are more engaged in outside lobbying and raising public awareness in order to reach their goals [105, 103]. They usually are single-issue interest groups with a strong expertise in the issue in question and the ability to mobilize their members much easier [108]. They can provide information linked to particular policy areas, which is very valuable to legislators [109, 110]. In regard to the question which interest groups in US foreign policy is most successful, the literature claims that ethnic and business groups are most important [79, p. 22-25].

1.5 Exerting Pressure on Decisionmakers

Regarding the previously mentioned strategies of lobbying activity, inside lobbying is the means of directly approaching legislators, and outside lobbying signifies to pressure legislators via the media, the public or external events [111; 112, p. 70]. To directly lobby legislators, interest groups use financial campaign contributions as well as formal/semi-formal and informal channels, membership and participation in boards and committees. The lobbying takes place through face-to-face meetings and discussions, the development of relationships and trust, direct incentives, the issuing of letters, position papers, reports to congressional staff, drafts of legislation, strategizing with members of Congress as well as testimonies at hearings [59, p. 153]. Interest groups also tend to provide their expertise and advise congressional staff and public office holders to push a policy as staffers tend to lack in-depth expertise in foreign policy issues and do not have sufficient time for research [110, 113, 109, 114, 93]. Next to advisory support, interest groups also develop new policy approaches, which means that an interest group might offer the only information on a particular issue [72, p. 13; 84, p. 53]. Their provided information is very specific and policy-related lobbying success more probable [59]. Outside lobbying implies public campaigns and advocacy, like grassroots mobilization of members and of the public, political debates, public meetings, speeches, protests or rallies. Outside lobbying also involves the media by publishing advertisements, articles aimed for public education, i.e. public relations, or editorials [59, p. 129]. In order to succeed, interest groups also tend to use coalition-building with other interest groups as well as a public endorsement of a candidate or, as a punishment, of the political adversary [115, p. 2; 116, p. 35-36; 59, p. 129-153; 14, p. 3].

The results of several studies emphasize the use of a variety of lobbying

techniques for interest groups to be successful [13, 115, 75, 117, 118, 107, 119, 116]. Some scholars claim that there is a decline in insider access pushing interest groups towards using the media as alternative means to communicate with legislators, which underlines the importance for interest groups to engage in a public debate [120, 121, 122]. One essential strategy for interest groups is the reliance on the status quo as the US political system offers more chances of success when aiming to delay and obstruct new resolutions or reforms in the legislative, administrative, and judicial processes rather when introducing a new policy [5, p. 162-163]. In 81% of the time interest groups propagating the status quo were successful in reaching their goals at least partly [59, p. 52]. A change in the status quo is rare but if it occurs it is rather significant [30, p. 239-241; 59, p. 54]. This explains the relevance for this study, which seeks to analyze the reasons for the sudden shift in US foreign policy in respect to Iran. The change of the status quo was only possible through the combination of a number of factors, which will be further discussed in the next two chapters.

1.6 Access Points for Interest Groups

This research focuses on the House of Representatives because it can be expected that lobbying success may be easier to reach within this institution than through the Senate or at the level of the Presidency. This legislative body tends to be approached first by interest groups due to a high number of potential points of entry and the responsiveness of its members to demands from interest groups, which originates from limited resources and rising costs of election campaigns aggravated by the short two-year term [123, p. 109]. The cost of an average election campaign for the House of Representatives has doubled in the past two decades, which makes political candidates even more vulnerable to interest groups [124].

Interest groups are involved in different stages of a policy in the decisionmaking process such as agenda-setting, formulation, adoption, and implementation. Depending on the stage, interest groups become active in framing debates and setting the political agenda, encouraging commitments from state and other key officials, shaping procedural change in institutions at the domestic level to find new ways for policy dialogue, influencing policies, and seeking behavior changes in key actors [125, p. 2012].

The agenda-setting stage is essential for the policymaking process. During this stage various actors are trying to put policy issues on the political agenda while attempting to block other issues. Interest groups raise the attention on a respective issue in order to place it on the legislative agenda directly via legislators or via the public [126, p. 220]. The informal exchange between interest groups and legislators that occurs between interest groups and the office holders mostly remains undocumented, which is why this research relies on data gathered during the following two stages.

During the formulation stage, representatives directly propose an initiative, but they compete with hundreds of initiatives annually. This initiative can fail at various different stages: at the respective sub-committee, the committee, the floor, or when it is vetoed. After it is assigned to a committee, the chairman either decides to put it on the legislative agenda or he does not. In that case it dies automatically after the two years of a congressional session, unless the bill has been re-introduced [5, p. 56; 59, p. 45]. During this stage there may be public hearings to gather information from concerned parties. These enable interest groups to publicly debate an issue to raise attention [125, p. 25].

The adoption stage shows the final outcome of a policy, which, in this study, will be compared to the original goals of interest groups. During this time, most interest groups have already worked for or against the propagation of the bill. As this period consists of 30-60 days during which the public and interest groups can officially comment on the bill, there are only last minute appeals to be expected. When the Rule Committee grants a bill as a 'rule' the path is clear for debate in the full House and the vote is taken via voice vote, roll call, or electronic voting. When the Senate also passes the bill, the president signs the bill into law or it automatically becomes law after ten working days – if there is no veto used [5, p. 56-57]. The respective institution then carries out the implementation of the bill. After discussing who interest groups are and how and when they lobby, this chapter concludes with an assessment of the most relevant factors for lobbying success.

1.7 Factors Contributing to Lobbying Success

Choosing the right ally is essential for policymakers to reach a policy goal, which leads them to cooperate with interest groups in exchange for financial and organizational support [63, p. 46; 88, p. 212]. This study understands this kind of cooperation as legislative subsidy for office-holders [127, p. 69]. As interest groups do not act in a vacuum but are part of an ever-changing environment their lobbying success involves other factors. When deciding on policy issues legislators take into consideration the general situation in the country, the president's position, and the mobilization of or support by several political actors. Here, the most important factors supporting lobbying success were derived from the literature and divided into two different categories: the inside factors, which derive from the *characteristics of interest groups*, and the outside factors, which stem from the *domestic and international political context*. The *characteristics of interest groups* include campaign contributions, access, district representation, coalition-building, and organizational strength. The *domestic and international political context* includes media attention, the role of the public, presidential support, and policy windows created by the international context. The categories were adjusted in order to integrate as many conditions as possible and organized to enable a subsequent comparison to other scholars' work on the conditions of interest group influence. In the following paragraphs the factors related to characteristics of interest groups are described in detail.

1. *Financial contributions*: To run in US elections is expensive because of the enduring election process, little party backing for support, the need to employ experts, and costly media campaigns, as well as polls in order to test strategies. Only presidential candidates receive party funds, which finance part of the expenses of their campaigns [5, p. 188-171]. Legislators have to turn to interest groups as they mobilize their members to vote, provide voluntary work, and contribute financially to the campaign [128, p. 121]. With the candidates' rising need for financial and organizational support they are very vulnerable to direct public pressure [63, p. 63-64; 5, p. 151; 125, p. 28-29; 70, p. 93]. Even interest groups with few members use contributions to win the support of candidates for public office. As access means everything for influencing policymakers, funding campaigns is an important tool for interest groups. In the election cycles of 2012 and 2014, the average winner spent \$1.6 and \$1.5

million, respectively. In the 2016 election cycle the amount stayed about the same, but the total amount of lobbying expenditures jumped from \$67 million in 2012 to \$120 million in 2016 in regard to House races [129, 130]. Some of the groups that donate a lot of money to political candidates are Jewish American associations who regularly contribute approximately half of the campaign funds for Democratic national elections [131, p. 155]. Jewish groups or individuals also financed up to 60% of President Bill Clinton's campaign during the 1992 primaries [70, p. 107]. Not all money spent on lobbying can be found in official registers though. Political non-profit organizations are not obliged to disclose their donors and can give unlimited donations to Super PACs, which blurs the money trail. Summing up, campaign contributions are essential for candidates to win elections, and interest groups use their financial support to deepen or establish relations with officials. The competition for funds strengthens the role of interest groups and their ability for influence. However, the strength of some interest groups leads to an unequal representation of interests and an imbalance of political influence. Several research projects question the importance of influence through financial contributions. They demonstrate that resources have almost no, or only a limited impact, on the selection of political strategies and the ability to shape policy outcomes [132, 133, 134, 121, 135]. As Richard Smith [136, p. 91] underlines the evidence of existing research on financial contributions is based on anecdotes, interviews, and mostly incomplete correlation studies. Nevertheless, the argument that money provides access seems to be consensual [137, 138, 136].

2. *Access*: Access is very important to interest groups in order to directly state their opinion to individual official holders. Various political scientists have focused on access as a precondition for influence [15, 16, 139]. Case studies allow linking access to influence, but do not offer generalizability when groups gain access across issues and time [140, p. 316]. The interaction with legislators is hard to track and calendars are not typically made public, which leads to a lack of data on the number of emails, calls, or meetings with a legislator. This is the reason why this research relies on congressional hearings as an indicator of access. As interest is rarely neutral, hearings signify that Congress might consider direct attention to a policy area [140, p. 5].
3. *District representation*: Exerting pressure on members of Congress is particularly successful when it originates from ethnic minorities

as well as businesses or members of other interest groups located in the member's district. Representatives tend to vote based on the interest of their constituency, except when they have differing ideological views, party ambitions or because of an obligation to an interest group. Because international affairs are not the top priority of the general public, only members of Congress representing communities with strong ethnic minorities or strong corporate interests tend to get involved in foreign policy committees [72, p. 13; 89, p. 27-28; 9, p. 771; 65, p. 428-432].

4. *Coalition-building*: Working together in a coalition is one of the most common tactics that groups use as it is an effective way of sharing resources to organize initiatives and shape policies. To mobilize a variety of actors in a coalition can be crucial to reach a shared policy goal [30, p. 202; 141, p. 213; 142; 117; 143; 118, p. 241; 106, p. 278]. Coalition participation has grown in recent years because the increasing number of interest groups makes it difficult for individual groups to attract attention [144, 145]. Being part of a coalition increases the uniformity and importance of the message sent by interest groups to policymakers.
5. *Organizational strength*: Strong interest groups are more effective in reaching their goals. The factor "strength" comprises lobbying expenditures, revenues, staff [72, p. 10-13; 59, p. 36], as well as salaries and the founding year.

The factors in the second category *domestic and international political context* indirectly contribute to the lobbying success of an interest group.

1. *Media attention*: "The greatest obstacle for lobbies needing media attention to help them persuade policymakers, is to get the media to pay attention in the first place. [...] To get any kind of coverage is a major victory for many lobbyists around town." [30, p. 183] Several studies agree that high salience is a necessity for influence-taking [146; 68, p. 14; 75, p. 231; 70, p. 120]. However, salience can also be a sign of too much controversy, which might lead legislators to turn away from an issue [141, p. 204]. A single interest group has a lower chance of lobbying success in regard to a highly salient issue than when acting in a coalition because with high salience the scope of an issue usually increases. With large-scope issues the attraction to form ad hoc issue coalitions rises as this enables the interest groups to show the united strength of a movement with an important political voice [59, 40-41].
2. *Public opinion*: As most governments would not act against the will

of the majority of the public, the public does have an important role. Depending on the public support in favor or against a policy, interest groups might be more successful in regard to the respective issue. Policymakers tend to support goals that are in accordance with public opinion as this means less conflict within Congress and higher chances of success [72, p. 10-13; 68, p. 11; 19, p. 365-370].

3. *Presidential support*: An alignment of the interest groups' goal to the goal of policymakers is almost a carte blanche for success as there is already a consensus of the desired position [72, p. 10-13; 19, p. 365-370; 30; 6, p. 149; 5, p. 52; 84, p. 51-52].
4. *Policy windows*: The sudden occurrence of opportunities for lobbying success may stem from a changed involvement of the international community [147, 202] or other focusing events [148, p. 165-167; 59, p. 41]. A focusing event alters the attention of policymakers and the public in regard to an issue as its importance rises or declines as an effect. This event can create momentum for policy change interest groups, which seek a break from the status quo, can benefit from [59, p. 41]. As previously mentioned, policy change usually is far more difficult to achieve than to maintain the status quo.

While the first category, *characteristics of interest groups* described the conditions based on interest groups themselves, the *domestic and international political context* contained outside factors that might contribute to lobbying success. Given the complexity of the environment in which these factors play a role, it becomes clear that not one factor can lead to the lobbying success of an interest group, but rather, a combination of these factors. The following chapter will illustrate in which regard the theoretical assumptions coincide with the empirical data gathered for this study, and in which way they do not.

Chapter 2

Disentangling the Web of Influence in US Strategy with Iran

The influence of domestic constraints on American foreign policymaking is hardly surprising for a democratic society.

McCormick [53]

Starting with the final decision of the 114th Congress on the lifting of sanctions as determined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the members of the House of Representatives turned from their prior bipartisan hawkish position in respect to Iran to one determined by party affiliation. Democrats voted mostly against confrontative measures and Republicans voted in favor of them. To analyze the reasons behind this change, the most relevant factors in regard to the role of interest groups are discussed in this chapter. The nine factors contributing to lobbying success as characterized in the introduction and supported by the literature in the previous chapter are here tested empirically in respect to their actual relevance.

2.1 The Two Levels of Policymaking

The decisionmaking process regarding US foreign policy with Iran is influenced on many different levels. This study focuses on the interest group involvement and other actors in regard to the policy outcome based on two sets of factors from the inside as well as the outside level: the *characteristics of interest groups* and the *domestic and international political context*. The different factors of the two categories show the circumstances when lobbyists can or cannot succeed. For each interest group cluster the dependent variable *policy outcome* was compared to investigate the independent variables summarized in the inside and outside factors. The variation in legislation outcome was operationalized in two ways: For individual legislators financial contributions and the district representation of interest groups were set in comparison to the respective voting behavior of the member. In all other cases, the number of passed and dead resolutions served as a general trend for evaluating lobbying success.

The resolutions for this study were based on their content related to sanctions legislation or diplomatic engagement with Iran introduced during the 110th-114th Congress periods. As there were no resolutions passed in favor of diplomacy there is a lack of variance in the achieved policy outcomes, which is substituted by the changing votes or number of resolutions introduced by the members.

There were 69 resolutions in total, comprising:

- 16 with registered votes (roll calls)
- 53 resolutions without votes (dead resolutions)

The votes on resolutions were categorized as follows: "Yes-Votes", legislators voting in favor of sanctions, and "No-Votes", legislators voting in favor of diplomacy, and "Not Voting" (NV-Votes). "Present-Votes" were counted as "Yes-" or "No-Votes" depending on whether the legislator corrected the original vote in additional official statements in the congressional record. If legislators missed a vote but wanted to have their statement recorded on how they would have voted, these statements were included as votes. Before the 114th Congress period, 95% of all votes were Yes-Votes, 3% were No-Votes, and 3% NV-Votes.

2.2 The Interest Groups Selected

For this study only relevant interest groups were selected with an important political voice, i.e. relevant groups that interacted with policy-makers on issues related to Iran and that were involved in the political process. Relevance is understood in a way that interest groups engaged in this process had to show a minimum amount of activity and financial commitment. For the former, interest groups had to submit at least four lobby reports during the selected timeframe of 2007-2014 containing the keyword "Iran". In addition, the interest groups' lobby expenditures had to exceed a certain financial minimum, which was set at \$20,000, for at least two out of four for the chosen Congress periods during the 110th-113th Congress periods, i.e., the years 2007-2014.

The selected interest groups below are those that provided sufficient data for a valid comparison. They are divided into two groups: the side supporting sanctions and those supporting diplomatic solutions. For simplicity, these two clusters are referred to as the Pro-Sanctions side and the Pro-Diplomacy side.

Pro-Sanctions Side

- ACT! for America
- American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)
- American Jewish Committee (AJC)
- Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
- Bipartisan Policy Center Advocacy Network
- Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)
- J Street (until the 114th Congress period)
- Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC)

Pro-Diplomacy Side

- Americans for Peace Now (APN)
- Center for Arms Control & Non-Proliferation
- Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
- J Street (from the 114th Congress period onwards)
- National Foreign Trade Council Inc.

The group J Street supported Iran sanctions until the 113th Congress period and then rallied for the JCPOA in the 114th Congress period. This is why the group was initially categorized as Pro-Sanctions and later as Pro-Diplomacy. The selection of interest groups correlated with the

interview results with actors who dealt with policymaking issues concerning Iran. Asked in respect to the most important interest groups in US foreign policy towards Iran, fourteen out of fifteen congressional House staffers named AIPAC, followed by J Street with nine out of fifteen. A couple of staffers named FCNL, the National Iranian American Council (NIAC), and the Arms Control Association. All six interviewed interest group representatives named AIPAC as the most influential group; four representatives also named J Street as well as the Ploughshares Fund. Half of the six interest group representatives also named NIAC. NIAC as well as the Ploughshares Fund did not meet the criteria of this research in order to be selected as relevant interest group but as they, nevertheless, had an important impact on the reaching of the JCPOA, they will be discussed further in the section on coalition-building. The interviewees wished to remain anonymous, the questionnaires, however, can be found in the appendix. The interviews were conducted with fifteen congressional staffers or former staffers: three from Republican members, nine from House Democrats, and three staffers from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Armed Services Committee, and the Committee on Homeland Security – including two Republicans. The interviews with interest group representatives were conducted with the employees or former employees of J Street, the Arms Control Association, the Republican Jewish Coalition, Americans For Peace Now, AIPAC, and NIAC. Additional interviews were also conducted with Iran experts from governmental institutions, think tanks as well as a media outlet.

2.2.1 Business Groups

The selected Pro-Diplomacy and Pro-Sanctions interest group clusters do not contain business groups as they did not provide sufficient data for the analysis. The lack of data concerned, for example, official positions on Iran as well as data for the factor of organizational strength such as salary levels and number of personnel. When asked about the relations to Iran some business representatives denied that the respective company was involved in matters concerning Iran, sometimes with an additional remark that Iran was a national security issue.¹ This clearly stood in

¹Email by an employee of the National Association of Manufacturers received on 26 October 2013; email by an employee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as well as BP received on 21 October 2013; email by an employee of the American Association of Exporters and Importers as well as of ABB Ltd received on 14 October 2013.

contrast to the publicly available lobby reports submitted to the United States Senate's Lobbying Disclosure Act Database by these businesses; amongst other topics these reports contained the keyword "Iran" in the field "lobbying subject". In general, the lobbying expenditures of businesses concerning Iran were very high compared to the other selected interest groups. The quarterly submitted reports contained a variety of issues, and out of these the expenditures for Iran could not be singled out. This problem existed for all interest groups, but as the other groups were much smaller in comparison, they were obliged to spend less on lobbying for other issues and rather had to concentrate on one or very few issues. Their expenditures, therefore, enabled a clearer prediction for their Iran involvement. Businesses were involved in many more issues than only Iran compared to non-profit organizations or single interest groups, so their financial contributions would have distorted the overall display of the expenditures of all interest groups. For the factor district representation the only data available was for business groups.

2.3 Overview of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses aimed to explain the conditions of lobbying success leading up to the change in the voting behavior of the legislators in the House of Representatives during the times of rising US sanctions policy from the 110th Congress period (2007-2008) to the path towards diplomacy in the 114th Congress period (2015-2016). The interest groups' success or failure to reach their goals under the analyzed conditions was tested based on the voting behavior of the members of the House of Representatives or the number of resolutions either in favor of sanctions or in favor of a diplomatic solution.

Category One: Characteristics of Interest Groups

- Hypothesis 1: The higher the financial contributions of an interest group the more successful it is in reaching its goals
- Hypothesis 2: The higher the number of hearings of an interest group the more access it gains to representatives and, therefore, the more successful it is in reaching its goals.
- Hypothesis 3: The stronger the representation of an interest group in a district the more successful it is in reaching its goals.
- Hypothesis 4: The stronger the coalition built by interest groups the more successful they are in reaching their goals.

- Hypothesis 5: The higher the degree of organizational strength of an interest group the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

Category Two: Domestic and International Political Context

- Hypothesis 6: The higher the media attention of an issue the more successful the interest group is in reaching its goals.
- Hypothesis 7: The more public opinion coincides with the interest group's goals the more successful the interest group is in reaching them.
- Hypothesis 8: The more presidential support an interest group enjoys the more successful it is in reaching its goals.
- Hypothesis 9: The more support a policy window created by the international context lends to an interest group's goal the more successful it is in reaching its goal.

The hypotheses were tested in relation to the collected data as follows.

2.4 Test of Hypotheses: Interest Group Characteristics

The following section discusses the data for the hypotheses related to the interest group characteristics, the inside factors of lobbying. This includes campaign contributions, access, district representation, coalition-building, and organizational strength.

2.4.1 Hypothesis 1: Financial Contributions

The higher the financial contributions of an interest group the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

2.4.1.1 Operationalization

The data of the interest groups' financial contributions stemmed from official donations by interest groups and PACs to individual representatives of the House as submitted to the Federal Election Commission and was provided by the Center for Responsive Politics (OpenSecrets.org).

The nonprofit organization MapLight structured the data into searchable categories such as industry, candidate name, election cycle, contributor name, and contributor employer. The 114th Congress period from 2015-2016 was not considered for the factor financial contributions. This period would have distorted the average donation per candidates due to the significant change in the voting behavior starting with the vote on approval of the JCPOA in September 2015 when almost 50% of the members turned against the previous bipartisan sanctions strategy. The script, which was used to process and analyze the data, is included in the appendix. It should also be considered that, apart from official contributions to political candidates and parties, there are non-traceable contributions, which cannot be drawn upon in the analysis. The non-transparent ways money can reach members of Congress or candidates include undisclosed donations and dark money but also official financial contributions or lobby expenditures, as they could rarely be connected to the exact cause and means. Financial contributions showed precisely the money flowing from an interest group to a political candidate but without a reason for the donation. In the interviews only one staffer of a Democratic member of the House and one committee staffer as well as two interest group representatives, J Street and AIPAC, openly mentioned financial contributions as a lobbying technique despite the dependency on money for legislators to win elections.²

2.4.1.2 Analysis

In general, it can be said that the financial contributions were higher from the Pro-Sanctions side and favored legislators voting in favor of sanctions legislation. During the 113th Congress period, just before J Street's switch to the Pro-Diplomacy side, the group's donation efforts intensified, which might have supported favorable voting towards a diplomatic solution.

Between the 110th-113th Congress periods legislators that voted in favor of Iran sanctions resolutions mostly received financial contributions up to \$50,000 (see table 2.1). Those legislators who voted against sanctions, mostly received contributions under \$10,000 (see table 2.2).

²The interviews with the staffers were conducted on 31 August 2015 and on 21 September 2015; the interviews with the representatives of J Street and of AIPAC were conducted on 9 September 2015 and on 11 September 2015, respectively.

Total Contributions in \$	Pro-S Donations	Pro-D Donations
0	44%	88%
0–10,000	27%	11%
10,000–50,000	22%	1%
50,000–100,000	4%	0%
100,000–650,000	3%	0%

Table 2.1: Financial Contributions of Interest Group Clusters for Legislators who Voted Yes Between the 110th-113th Congress Periods

Total Contributions in \$	Pro-S Donations	Pro-D Donations
0	52%	88%
0–10,000	44%	12%
10,000–50,000	4%	0%
50,000–100,000	0%	0%
100,000–650,000	0%	0%

Table 2.2: Financial Contributions of Interest Group Clusters for Legislators who Voted No Between the 110th-113th Congress Periods

In the interviews only one staffer of a Democratic member of the House and one committee staffer as well as two interest group representatives from J Street and AIPAC openly mentioned financial contributions as lobbying technique.³ This stands in contrast to the rising dependency on money for running for an office in the House of Representatives [124]. The non-transparency of the factor financial contributions underlines the difficulty of assessing this factor.

Conclusion 1.0: Legislators supporting sanctions were more likely to receive higher contributions during the 110th-113th Congress periods, which were distributed mostly by Pro-Sanctions groups.

When comparing the mean donations per legislator⁴ from the respective groups it became clear that the contributions from two groups stand out: AIPAC and J Street. Other Pro-Sanctions groups as well as Pro-Diplomacy groups were put aside here because of their relative insignifi-

³The interviews with the staffers were conducted on 31 August 2015 and on 21 September 2015; the interviews with the representatives of J Street and AIPAC were conducted on 9 September 2015 and on 11 September 2015, respectively.

⁴The mean amount of donations is calculated by the amount of donations per legislator divided by the total amount of donations for all legislators who received donations from the group.

Congress Period	Total Contributions	Legislators Supported	Mean Contributions
110	\$74,093	23	\$3,221
111	\$62,350	55	\$1,134
112	\$221,820	39	\$5,688
113	\$938,107	83	\$11,302

Table 2.3: Overview of Financial Contributions by J Street During the 110th-113th Congress Periods

cant donations. Even though J Street split from the Pro-Sanctions cluster during the 114th Congress period, it is very likely that the group already started supporting the Pro-Diplomacy cause during the 113th Congress period. J Street's growing strength can be seen prior to the 114th Congress period through its financial contributions and the increased funding it received from the Ploughshares Fund (for details on the funding see the section on coalition-building). During the 113th Congress period J Street managed to increase its mean financial contributions to the level of the Pro-Sanctions groups. The main contributions from the Pro-Sanctions groups stemmed from affiliated groups of AIPAC. As AIPAC is a 501(c)(4) organization (see previous chapter), the group is not allowed to donate directly to political candidates. Instead, the group relies on PACs founded for this cause as well as individual donors. The following comparison of financial contributions relies on the category "Pro-Israel" as established by the Center for Responsive Politics. This category contains next to sister organizations of the selected Pro-Sanctions groups also some groups from the Pro-Diplomacy side, which were accordingly excluded [149]. In this Congress period the Pro-Israel groups' mean contributions dropped for the first time to under \$20,000, almost \$5,000 less than in the previous Congress period. The data shows that J Street not only heightened its mean contributions immensely by the time of the 113th Congress period but also tripled the amount of legislators the group donated to (see table 2.3 and 2.4). The Pro-Israel groups, on the other hand, showed a drop in contributions.

Conclusion 1.1: J Street intensified its donation efforts prior to officially splitting from the Pro-Sanctions side to the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period. The group's increase in financial strength is shown in the mean amount of contributions to legislators, which is almost at the same level as the contributions by the Pro-Israel groups. This shows that J Street's success in reaching its goal during the 114th Congress period was supported by rising financial contributions.

Congress Period	Total Contributions	Legislators Supported	Mean Contributions
110	\$5,388,289	201	\$26,807
111	\$6,433,640	215	\$29,924
112	\$6,223,120	274	\$22,712
113	\$4,514,644	251	\$17,987

Table 2.4: Overview of Financial Contributions by Pro-Israel Groups During the 110th-113th Congress Periods

2.4.2 Hypothesis 2: Access

The higher the number of hearings of an interest group the more access it gains to representatives and, therefore, the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

2.4.2.1 Operationalization

A significant problem for the factor access resulted from the most common techniques of interest group activity: Ten out of 15 interviewed congressional House staffers stated that interest groups mainly made use of direct meetings and three stated that they used educational information. Interviews with interest group representatives of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Americans For Peace Now, the Arms Control Association, J Street, AIPAC, and NIAC confirmed that they frequently contacted members directly or through constituents – some of them called or talked to members on a daily basis, three relied on publications, two named financial contributions. These findings show that lobbying mainly relies on contacting legislators, a technique which is hardly recorded and, therefore, barely traceable. Here, hearings serve as the sole indicator for access due to the unavailability of other data. The data is based on the hearing listings on sanctions legislation or diplomacy initiatives regarding Iran provided by the Government Publishing Office’s FDsys website.

2.4.2.2 Analysis

A representative of the Friends Committee of National Legislation underlined the importance of hearings for interest groups: "Certainly those groups that do testify in hearings often do have greater access to members

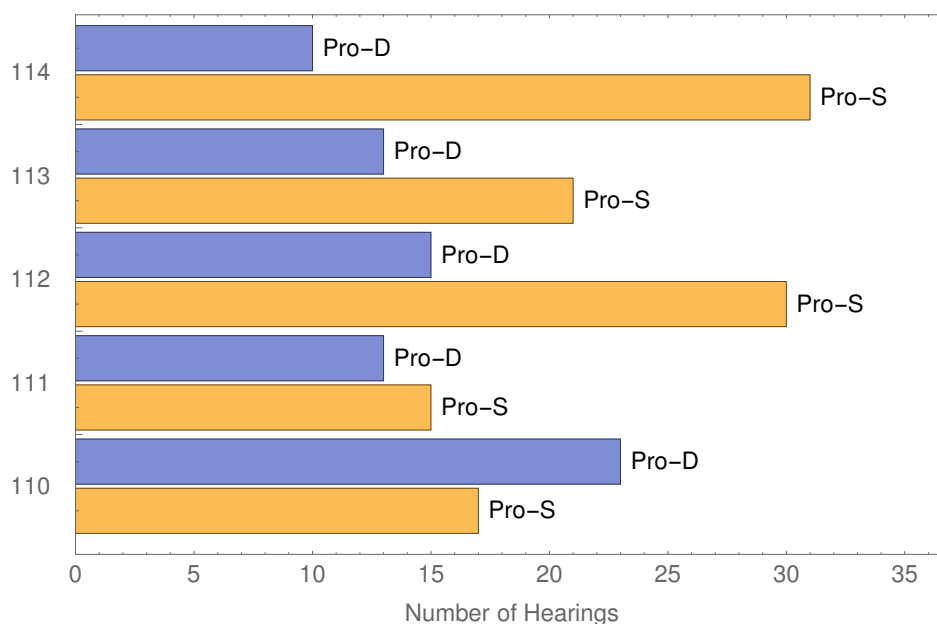


Figure 2.1: Amount of Hearings from Interest Groups During the 110th-114th Congress Periods

of Congress, and hearings do enable greater access to policymakers."⁵ As shown in figure 2.1, the Pro-Sanctions side (Pro-S) was represented more times than the Pro-Diplomacy side (Pro-D) at hearings with legislators. The higher access might have been a reason for the lobbying success of the Pro-Sanctions side until the 113th Congress period. The success of the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period exposed that hearings were not necessarily essential for reaching its goal. Despite the success during this period the amount of Pro-D hearings dropped to the lowest amount in the selected timeframe.

Conclusion 2.0: The high number of hearings might have helped the Pro-Sanctions side's goals until the 113th Congress period. However, the low number of hearings by the Pro-Diplomacy groups emphasized that these groups did not rely on hearings for their lobbying success during the 114th Congress period.

⁵Email by a representative of the Friends Committee of National Legislation received on 30 September 2014.

2.4.3 Hypothesis 3: District Representation

The stronger the representation of an interest group in a district the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

2.4.3.1 Operationalization

It matters greatly to a congressional member to know her or his constituency. The number of interest groups members is, however, rarely publicly released, let alone their exact amount per state or per district. For businesses interested in trading with Iran the number of employees was also not always transparent and had partially to be derived from job vacancies listed in job search engines. The only available data of ethnic representation per district that could be drawn upon was the size of the Jewish population as listed in the Berman Jewish DataBank. The Jewish population is not an indicator for the number of members of Pro-Israel groups, which is why the respective data is discussed only in short.

For business groups at least an estimate of their district representation could be made. To gather data for these groups relevant businesses were selected with an obvious interest in Iranian issues. Relevance was conditioned by two characteristics: The first was to have submitted, at least twice, four lobby reports to the Lobby Disclosure Database per legislative period during the 110th-113th Congress periods. The second condition was that the business group listed, at least once, a minimum of \$500,000 as lobbying expenditures between 2007-2014 in the respective lobby reports. Both conditions underline the relevance of the institution in terms of activity and financial strength.

The selected institutions under these conditions were:

- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- The Boeing Company
- General Electric
- The Procter and Gamble Company
- Investment Company Institute
- The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, SWIFT
- CITGO Petroleum Corporation
- Louis Dreyfus Commodities LLC
- Halliburton Company

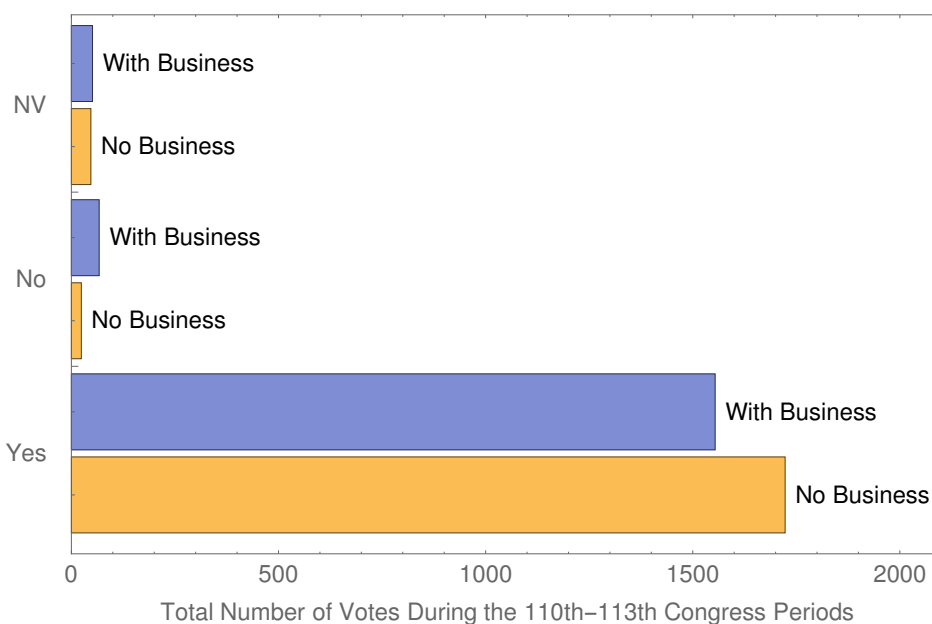


Figure 2.2: Business Concentration per District in Relation to Voting Behavior of Respective Legislators Between the 110th-113th Congress Periods

The data of the concentration in a district stems from official numbers provided by the institutions or, if that was unavailable, the number of job vacancies as listed in the job engines for the respective institution.

2.4.3.2 Analysis

When comparing the voting behavior of the legislators with and without relevant business institutions in their districts, the legislators voting against sanctions were more likely to have an institution located in their district. For legislators favoring sanctions there was no significant change in their voting behavior in regard to having an institution located in the district or not. 74% of the No-Votes, the legislators voting against sanctions legislation, in comparison to about 50% of the Yes-Votes and Not Voting-Votes could be connected to an institution operating in their district interested in trading with Iran. However, figure 2.2 demonstrate that the low amount of No-Votes weaken the significance of this finding.

Conclusion 3.0: There is a substantial relationship between corporate interests and legislators voting against sanctions, which could lead to the assumption that the selected businesses were successful in reaching their

Disentangling the Web of Influence in US Strategy with Iran

Jewish Population per District	0–5%	5–15%	15–40%
All Legislators	87%	10%	3%
Legislators Voting Yes	87%	10%	3%
Legislators Voting No	90%	10%	0%

Table 2.5: Jewish Population per District in Relation to the Vote Distribution During the 110th-113th Congress Periods

goals. However, the low number of legislators voting against sanctions during the selected timeframe is not strong enough as an indicator to make out a trend.

Regarding the ethnic concentration in a district it is misleading to use the Jewish population per district as an indicator for the strength of Pro-Israel groups. AIPAC, as the strongest member of the Pro-Israel groups, claims to "[...] represent a consensus among American Jews [, which] has always been a key to its political influence." [150] However, with 78% of American Jews voting in favor of President Barack Obama it is obvious that AIPAC's goals and the Jewish community's goals differ significantly: The support of Obama's Republican opponent Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential election by the Likud party, a strong supporter of AIPAC, underlined the gap between the American Jewish voting behavior and AIPAC's intentions [151]. Obama was the first president pushing for diplomatic relations with Iran, which was completely contrary to what AIPAC and Israel's Likud party were aiming for [152]. AIPAC strongly lobbied against the Iran deal, whereas 49% of American Jews supported the agreement [153]. Despite this circumstance the connection between the Jewish community and AIPAC can also not be negated: "For decades, the Jewish community was generally united in its support for Israel. [Now,] many feel that AIPAC does not speak for them." [154] Summing up, the Pro-Israel groups do not represent the Jewish population as a whole. And even if the Jewish population were to be taken as an indicator for the concentration of Pro-Israel group members, the number of Jewish people per district is extremely low. Table 2.5 shows that the majority of legislators, independent of their voting behavior, had a Jewish population of fewer than 5% in their districts. In summary, regarding the district representation of interest groups the only numbers available that could be used for this study, derive from business institutions.

2.4.4 Hypothesis 4: Coalition-Building

The stronger the coalition built by interest groups the more successful they are in reaching their goals.

2.4.4.1 Operationalization

For the Pro-Sanctions side there is only one umbrella organization that could be considered a coalition: the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Amongst its 51 member organizations the following are part of the relevant groups selected for this research: the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Americans for Peace Now (APN). Because the Conference of Presidents does not speak united with one voice and is rather loosely organized it is not considered in this analysis [155, p. 150]. For example, one of the member organizations, APN, is part of the Pro-Diplomacy group cluster for this research due to its support of the JCPOA and opposition to sanctions legislation against Iran. The only organization AIPAC unofficially formed prior to the JCPOA was the group Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran, which included former members of Congress [156]. On the other hand, the Pro-Diplomacy side managed to establish multiple coalitions to lobby against sanctions legislation and in favor of the nuclear deal.

Coalitions of the Pro-Diplomacy Side

- Americans for Peace Now (APN): Member of the Ploughshares Fund coalition; part of a joint letter campaign
- Center for Arms Control & Non-Proliferation: Part of a joint letter campaign; member of the former coalition Campaign for New American Policy with Iran
- Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL): Member of the Ploughshares Fund coalition; part of a joint letter campaign
- J Street: Member of the Ploughshares Fund coalition; part of a joint letter campaign
- National Foreign Trade Council Inc.: The group's lobby arm USA*Engage⁶ worked together with NIAC such as in the former coalition Campaign for New American Policy with Iran

⁶USA*Engage was founded by the National Foreign Trade Council in 1997 to promote business interests against sanctions. The group does not fulfill the conditions

Interest Groups	FCNL	J Street	J Street Education Fund	NIAC
2012	-	\$25,000	-	\$125,000
2013	-	\$105,000	\$70,000	\$110,000
2014	-	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$159,545
2015	\$75,000	\$150,000	\$426,500	\$281,211
2016	\$50,000	\$185,000	\$30,000	\$13,000

Table 2.6: Contributions to Pro-Diplomacy Groups for Actions Supporting Diplomatic Engagement with Iran from the Ploughshares Fund Between 2012-2016

2.4.4.2 Analysis

Working together in a coalition is one of the most common tactics of interest groups. However, only the Pro-Diplomacy side made use of this technique. Given that these groups lacked the resources of the Pro-Sanctions side they might have also been more dependent on joining a coalition.

The Pro-Diplomacy groups had formed previous alliances but during the time of final negotiations with Iran, the groups joined forces in the biggest coalition until then. In 2014, the Ploughshares Fund established a network of over 85 organizations and 200 individuals connecting think tanks, experts, and peace groups [157]. Amongst the members of the coalition were J Street, APN, FCNL as well as another active supporter of the nuclear deal, NIAC.⁷ The strength of the coalition was confirmed in interviews with an expert from the Atlantic Council and a representative of NIAC.⁸ The fund's financial support of various groups in favor of a diplomatic solution with Iran had already started in 2012. The steady increase in the contributions of the Ploughshares Fund for Pro-Diplomacy groups is exemplarily shown in table 2.6.

of relevance for this study, as its lobbying activity was not high enough during the selected timeframe.

⁷For a full list of organizations see: the Annual Report of the Ploughshares Fund [158].

⁸The interview with the representative of NIAC was conducted on 3 July 2017, and the interview with the Iran expert of the Atlantic Council was conducted on 7 July 2017.

The provision of contributions by the Ploughshares Fund shows the rising financial strength of several Pro-Diplomacy groups. The top recipient of contributions within the selected interest groups is J Street, which underlines the importance of the group for the lobbying activities towards a diplomatic solution with Iran. After 2012 J Street received about \$100,000 annually; the highest amount of contributions were distributed in 2015 and 2016 with \$150,000 and \$185,000. To support the group's lobbying activities right before the crucial vote of the legislators on the JCPOA, J Street's PAC, the J Street Education Fund, received another \$426,500 in 2015.⁹ The Ploughshares Fund's dedication in favor of a diplomatic solution can also be seen by its formation of the Iran Project bringing together more than 30 bipartisan senior national security experts to produce a study on the costs and benefits of military strikes against Iran to end its nuclear program [159]. The Pro-Diplomacy side also joined forces in the organization of a letter campaign in August 2015 urging Congress to support the Iran deal signed by 70 organizations, amongst them Americans for Peace Now, the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, J Street, and NIAC [160]. NIAC is an important organization to mention in regard to the lobbying in favor of a diplomatic solution. Its importance is underlined by the Ploughshares Fund's annual amount of contributions to the organization of over \$100,000 between 2012-2014, which increased to \$281,000 in 2015. The importance of NIAC for the Pro-Diplomacy side is explained here. The group has not been included in the analysis because it does not comply with the selected conditions of relevance; in this case the group has not submitted lobby reports. However, since its founding in 2002 the non-profit organization has been a key advocate against war with Iran and has been working closely together with J Street, the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation as well as USA*Engage and others. In 2008, NIAC became the coordinator of the newly formed coalition "Campaign for New American Policy with Iran" (CNAPI), which brought together USA*Engage, the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation as well as left, peace and religious groups. Despite it having ceased to exist two years later, NIAC continued to work with these groups forming another coalition with Americans for Peace Now, the Friends Committee on National Legislation and many more [161]. This shows that the relevance of NIAC in building coalitions

⁹As the J Street Education Fund is a PAC, it is not considered in this research but the amount of the received contributions from the Ploughshares Fund shows the fund's support towards J Street, the interest group behind the PAC.

has to be taken into consideration. In addition, several interview partners for this research have also named NIAC as one of the relevant interest groups in US foreign policy with Iran, i.e. two out of fifteen congressional staffers and three out of six interest group representatives. On the Pro-Sanctions side there was no coordinative approach to join forces in a coalition. AIPAC had been the strongest lobbying force so far but had been acting on its own. In the means of answering the Pro-Deal campaign by President Obama and the Pro-Diplomacy groups, AIPAC formed the non-profit organization Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran in 2015. This organization included former members of Congress but failed to establish a joined campaign with other Pro-Sanctions groups. The Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran had a budget of \$20-40 million to spend on television ads. The strength of the group becomes obvious when comparing its budget to the combined budget of eight of the biggest Pro-Diplomacy groups, which only amounted to over \$30 million [162, 163]. Apart from the coalitions by the selected interest groups for this study there were many coalitions by individuals on both sides who joined forces in 2015 by organizing open letters, op-eds or other initiatives.

Conclusion 4.0: The success of the Pro-Diplomacy side can be attributed to their combined resources considering the strength of its adversary. As the prior coalitions on the Pro-Diplomacy side show, the factor coalition-building on its own is no guarantee for success.

2.4.5 Hypothesis 5: Organizational Strength

The higher the degree of organizational strength of an interest group the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

2.4.5.1 Operationalization

The factor strength is made up of the components lobbying expenditures, revenue, salary levels, staff, and foundation year. The lobbying expenditures are derived from the amount stated in the lobby reports of the selected interest groups with the keyword "Iran", which were submitted to the Lobbying Disclosure Act Database during the 110th-114th Congress periods. The financial information for revenues, salaries and staff as well as the foundation year is accessible through the annually filed "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax", form 990, to

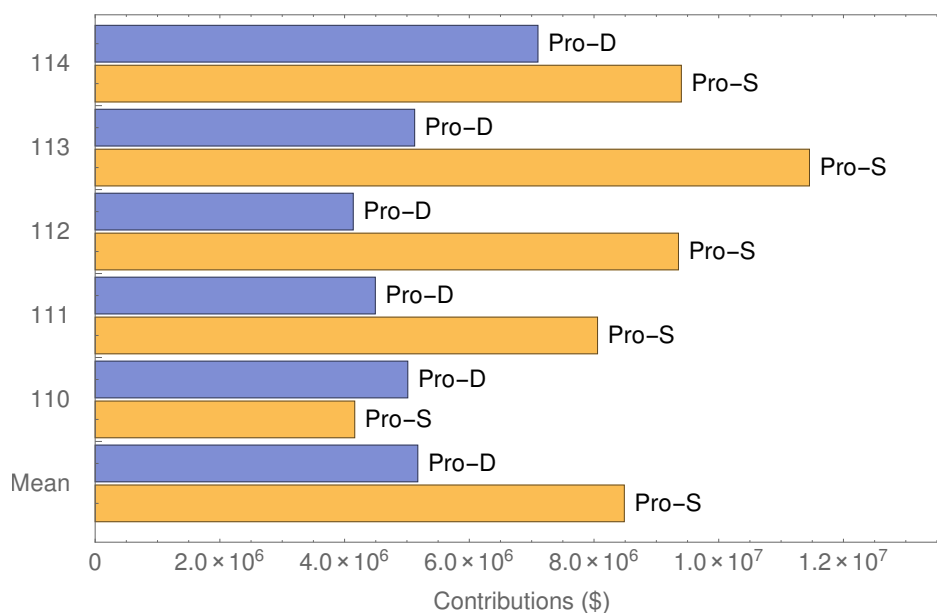


Figure 2.3: Amount of Lobby Expenditures from the Pro-Sanctions and Pro-Diplomacy Side on Iran During the 110th-114th Congress Periods

the United States Internal Revenue Service and has been archived by GuideStar’s Directory of Charities and Nonprofit Organizations. The forms were not accessible to all years during the selected timeframe of 2007-2016; this is why only the data for the years 2011, 2013, and 2015 are presented. The data is sufficient to underline the difference between the Pro-Sanctions side and the Pro-Diplomacy side as well as to present the development of each side throughout the years.

2.4.5.2 Analysis

Despite the considerably higher amount of lobby expenditures, the Pro-Sanctions side did not tip the balance in their favor regarding the Iran deal. Their high expenditures might have paid off in terms of favorable voting towards sanctions in previous Congress periods though (see figure 2.3).

In respect to revenues, the revenue of the Pro-Sanctions side was a lot higher than the revenue of the Pro-Diplomacy side (see table 2.7).

Also in regard to the total amount of salary levels and staff, the Pro-Sanctions side had a stronger standing than the Pro-Diplomacy side (see table 2.8).

Disentangling the Web of Influence in US Strategy with Iran

	2011	2013	2015
Pro-Sanctions Side	244,378,320\$	406,112,302\$	516,885,521\$
Pro-Diplomacy Side	9,658,932\$	10,778,415\$	12,767,446\$

Table 2.7: Total Revenues of the Pro-Sanctions Side and the Pro-Diplomacy Side in \$

	2011	2013	2015
Pro-Sanctions Side	81,063,077\$	116,748,823\$	128,453,771\$
Pro-Diplomacy Side	5,405,407\$	5,455,430\$	5,683,961\$

Table 2.8: Total Amount of Salaries of the Pro-Sanctions Side and the Pro-Diplomacy Side in \$

In respect to the staff, the total number for the Pro-Sanctions side amounted to 921 people, more than double than the amount of the Pro-Diplomacy side with 430 people (see table 2.9).

The older the interest group in regard to the founding year the more established they are in the means of organizational structures and in their relationships to legislators. Almost the same number of interest groups from the Pro-Sanctions and the Pro-Diplomacy side were founded before 2000. But the oldest two interest groups belonged to the Pro-Sanctions side: the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Federations for North America (see table 2.10).

Conclusion 5.0: The overall strength of the Pro-Sanctions side surpassed the strength of the Pro-Diplomacy side by far probably leading to their high success rate until the 113th Congress period. The rising financial strength of the Pro-Diplomacy side as seen in the lobby expenditures during the 114th Congress period can be taken as a contributing factor to the loss of the Pro-Sanctions side in regard to the successful negotiation of the JCPOA.

	2011	2013	2015
Pro-Sanctions Side	1,354	1,433	1,521
Pro-Diplomacy Side	133	140	172

Table 2.9: Total Number of Staff of the Pro-Sanctions Side and the Pro-Diplomacy Side

Disentangling the Web of Influence in US Strategy with Iran

Founding Year	Pro-Sanctions Side	Pro-Diplomacy Side
1929	American Jewish Committee	
1936	Jewish Federations of North America	
1942		National Foreign Trade Council Inc.
1946		Friends Committee on National Legislation
1968	American Israeli Public Affairs Committee	
1977	Anti-Defamation League	
1980		Center for Arms Control & Non-Proliferation
1980	Republican Jewish Coalition	
1989		Americans for Peace Now
2008	ACT! for America	
2008	Bipartisan Policy Center Advocacy Network	
2009	J Street (until the 114th Congress period)	J Street (from the 114th Congress period onwards)

Table 2.10: Founding Years of Selected Interest Groups

2.5 Test of Hypotheses: Domestic and International Political Context

The following section discusses the data for the hypotheses related to the domestic and international political context, the outside factors of lobbying. This includes media attention, public opinion, presidential support, and policy windows.

2.5.1 Hypothesis 6: Media Attention

The higher the media attention of an issue the more successful the interest group is in reaching its goals.

2.5.1.1 Operationalization

Salience due to media attention is measured by the amount of news coverage an issue, in this case, Iran sanctions resolutions, received. The number of media publications is derived from LexisNexis searches with the keywords "Iran" plus "sanction" in the body of an article. The selected timeframe for each resolution ranged from the date of introduction of the resolution to the date of the vote on the resolution; for dead resolutions the end point was set to seven days after the last registered action as found at Congress.gov, the official website for US federal legislative information. To limit the search findings only the most important US newspapers were selected: The Washington Post, The New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal Abstracts.

2.5.1.2 Analysis

Depending on the issue it is essential to gain the attention of the media to influence legislators. The high media visibility during the 114th Congress period enabled the Pro-Diplomacy side to be heard by legislators despite having fewer resources than the Pro-Sanctions side.

The media attention in regard to sanctioning Iran did not change much between the 110th-113th Congress periods. During the 114th Congress period the media coverage was suddenly three times higher than in any

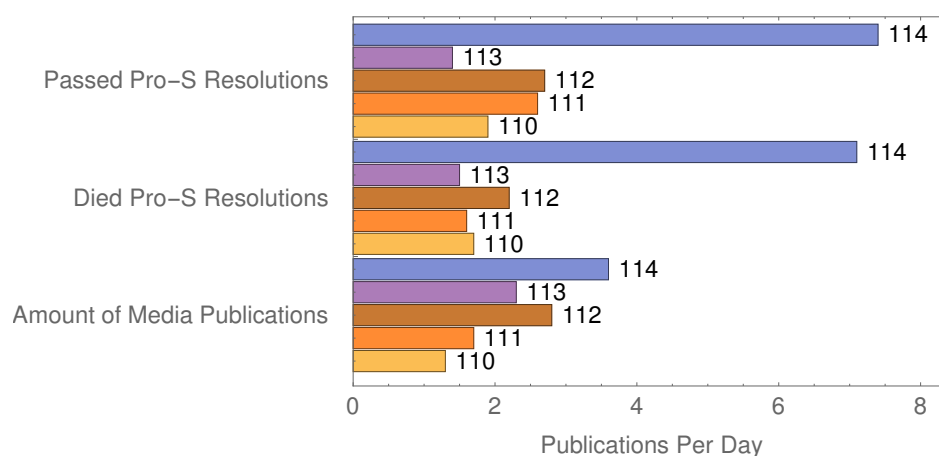


Figure 2.4: Average Amount of Media Publications Between the 110th-114th Congress Periods

other Congress period starting with the time of the vote on the JCPOA and its implementation as well as the following Iran sanctions resolutions (see figure 2.4).

Conclusion 6.0: Prior to the JCPOA the Pro-Sanctions groups had relied less on media attention. The high salience during the 114th Congress period helped the Pro-Diplomacy side gain visibility. The interviews confirmed that the Pro-Diplomacy side benefited from the high media visibility in promoting their goals, as it compensated their financial disadvantage.

2.5.2 Hypothesis 7: Public Opinion

The more public opinion coincides with the interest group’s goals the more successful the interest group is in reaching them.

2.5.2.1 Operationalization

Public opinion is represented through opinion polls conducted by GALLUP and the Pew Research Center.

2.5.2.2 Analysis

The majority of the American people do not have a favorable view of Iran and this changed only slightly during the selected timeframe for

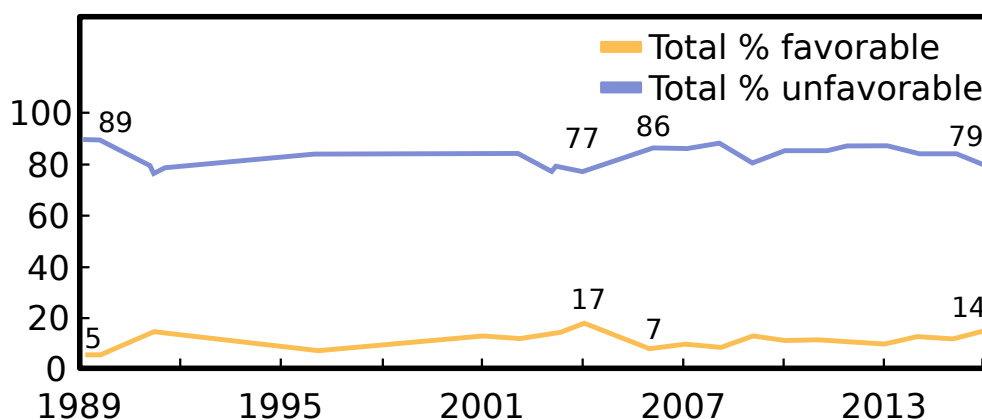


Figure 2.5: Opinion Poll Rating on Iran's Favorability from 1989-2016 [164]

this study. In regard to the JCPOA, a third of the interviewed people did not have an opinion on the matter; the rest either supported or opposed the deal. It seems that the lobbying in favor of a diplomatic solution by the Pro-Diplomacy groups had an impact on the perception of Iran as a national threat but did not affect the public in its opinion on the deal. As a number of interviewees stated that they had not received enough information on the deal, it is possible that the lobbying campaigns were only meant to reach the legislators and not the public. Some interviews underlined that the public pressured legislators in respect to a general war-weariness, which might have decreased the willingness of some legislators to vote for confrontative measures.

The favorability rating of Iran barely shows a change in the attitude towards Iran, as the poll suggests (see figure 2.5). In respect to the JCPOA the public did either not have an opinion on the matter or rather disapproved of the deal than to support it. This did not change three years later, as the numbers for 2018 show (see figure 2.6). One explanation for the high number of people undecided in their opinion on the deal could be the insufficient information the public received, as figure 2.7 indicates.

Conclusion 7.1: In summary, the rather negative view on Iran by the public has not changed much despite the lobbying of the Pro-Diplomacy side. The public attitude towards the JCPOA had been and continues to be either rather negative or uncertain with a third of the interviewees being undecided on the matter. Overall, the collected data does not imply a significant influence on the public, neither by the Pro-Sanctions nor the Pro-Diplomacy side. A possible explanation could be that the lobbying campaign by both sides was mainly aimed at legislators rather than the

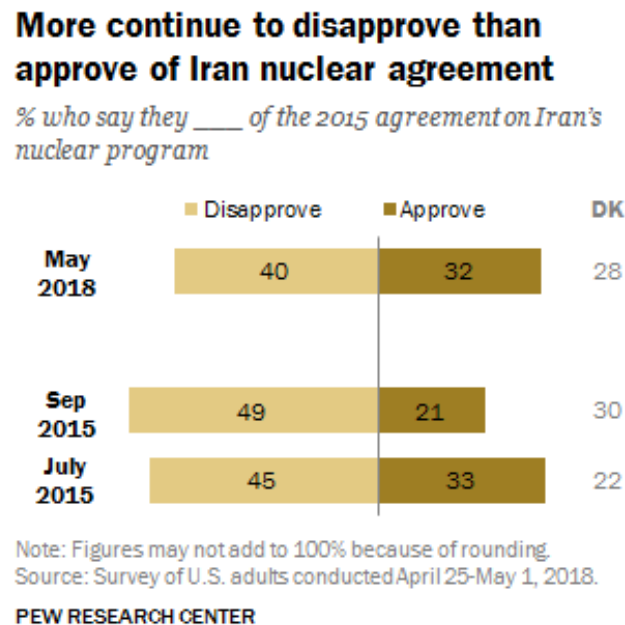


Figure 2.6: Opinion Poll for the Public Support of the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2015 and 2018 [165]

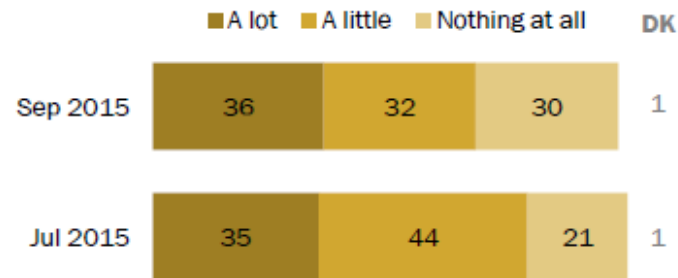
public, which could explain that two thirds of the interviewed people stated to have received no or little information on the deal with Iran.

In the interviews conducted for this study, four congressional staffers and a journalist of the Jewish Telegraph Agency named the war-weariness of the constituents, i.e. the opposition to new military measures, as an influence on their representatives' voting behavior. For them the public sentiment before the JCPOA was an important force behind the strategy change with Iran.¹⁰ In the opinion poll it can be seen that after the Iraq war the approval ratings by the public dropped for a proposed military intervention (see figure 2.8). In the case of Syria, the approval decreased to 36% in September 2013, almost half compared to the approval rate of 64% for Iraq ten years earlier. In addition, seventy-six percent of people said if their representative would vote in favor of a military action against Syria this would be considered in the next election [167]. All this underlines a general disapproval of military measures, but it is not exactly

¹⁰The interviews with three Democratic and one Republican staffers were conducted on 1, 2, and 8 September 2015, respectively. The interview with the journalist was conducted on 8 September 2015.

Fewer Report Hearing About Iran Agreement Than in Mid-July

% who say they have heard _____ about the agreement on Iran's nuclear program ...



Survey conducted Sept. 3-7, 2015. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 2.7: Opinion Poll on the Information Received in Respect to the Iran Deal [166]

applicable to the possible resistance a military strike on Iran might have provoked.

Conclusion 7.1: The public sentiment was against another military intervention, which the Pro-Sanctions side had called for from time to time. Portraying war as the only alternative to the JCPOA as used in the rhetoric by President Obama and the Pro-Diplomacy side might have pressured legislators to support a diplomatic solution. This is supported by the interviews conducted for this study. As the polls only ask for a potential military intervention in Syria as an example of the public war-weariness post-Iraq, this factor can only be considered as a general tendency in the population.

2.5.3 Hypothesis 8: Presidential Support

The more presidential support an interest group enjoys the more successful it is in reaching its goals.

Country/Region	Polling dates	Favor	Oppose	No opinion
Syria	Sep 3-4, 2013	36%	51%	13%
Iraq	Mar 14-15, 2003	64%	33%	3%
Afghanistan	Oct 5-6, 2001	82%	14%	4%
Kosovo/The Balkans	Feb 19-21, 1999	43%	45%	12%
Iraq/Persian Gulf	Jan 11-13, 1991	55%	38%	4%

Figure 2.8: Opinion Poll on Proposed Military Actions from 1991-2013 [168]

Congress Period	110	111	112	113	114
Pro-Sanctions Presidential Initiative	0	1	7	3	0
Pro-Diplomacy Presidential Initiative	1	1	0	7	1

Table 2.11: Presidential Initiatives During the 110th-114th Congress Periods

2.5.3.1 Operationalization

The support of the president for the goal of an interest group, or the lack thereof, can determine the lobbying success of the group. The president's rising support of a diplomatic solution can be seen in the number of presidential initiatives, as shown in table 2.11. *Pro-Sanctions Presidential Initiatives* include Executive Orders sanctioning Iran or cyber sabotage on Iran's nuclear program using the Flame and Stuxnet malware. *Pro-Diplomacy Presidential Initiatives* include milestones like first formal talks, the start of US engagement in the P5+1 talks as well as the revocation of Executive Orders, and measures promoting the Iran nuclear deal.¹¹

2.5.3.2 Analysis

Being on the same side of an issue as the administration is a very influential tool for interest groups to convince legislators. In the case of the nuclear deal with Iran, the Pro-Diplomacy side gained momentum as

¹¹For more details on the specific measures listed in table 2.11, see the next chapter.

soon as President Barack Obama became more engaged in the negotiations with Iran. He turned the former bipartisan Congress on that issue to a partisan one with the support and expertise of the Pro-Diplomacy groups. In particular, the support of Jewish groups like J Street and Americans for Peace Now convinced legislators to vote in favor of the JCPOA despite the strong condemnation of the deal by AIPAC and Israel's Likud party.

When Obama took office, he made it very clear that he wanted to start a new chapter in US-Iranian relations in favor of diplomacy [169]. As a first step, the United States started to fully participate in the P5+1 talks. The following policies of the administration, however, favored sanctions as shown in the high number of Pro-Sanctions Presidential Initiatives. During the second term of the 112th Congress period President Obama issued six Executive Orders sanctioning Iran. Halfway through the 113th Congress period a new round of P5+1 talks, supported by Obama, signaled a diplomatic solution to be close. In order not to threaten Iran's participation in a deal, Obama asked Congress to hold off on new sanctions. The number of Iran resolutions introduced by House representatives accordingly dropped to the lowest number of passed and dead sanctions resolutions. On 24 November 2013, an interim Joint Plan of Action could be agreed upon by the P5+1 and Iran. Its implementation was scheduled for 20 January 2014 [170].

"The debate [on the upcoming final agreement] animated the antiwar movement on the left and exposed the diminishing power of the Israeli lobbying force that spent tens of millions of dollars to prevent the accord." [12] With the president's close alliance to Pro-Diplomacy groups with Jewish origin like J Street and APN, Democratic legislators were convinced to oppose the much stronger AIPAC without fear of revenge. The following incident underlines very clearly the failure of AIPAC. The Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Mark Kirk (R-IL), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) introduced a new sanctions resolution on 20 December 2013, just after the interim deal with Iran was reached. AIPAC pushed for the bill and for Democratic co-sponsors even though the bill openly confronted the president. The bill was about to provoke a historic conflict with the administration, as it would impose new sanctions and secure the support of Israel in a potential attack on Iran. The group expected that in view of the midterm elections Democrats would side with the Republicans and break with the, at that time, rather unpopular president [154, 171]. "'There are a lot of Democratic senators who are up for election this year,' one Republican Senate staff member said. 'I bet

they would vote against the White House if AIPAC pushed for a vote.'"
[172] To convince Democrats to vote for the bill the argument was that
"the goal isn't to disrupt things, it's to make Iran even more willing to
make serious concessions by making them aware of what will happen if
they don't"[173], so an aide.

The strong opposition of the administration against the bill, however,
influenced the Democrats. A senior administration official underlined:
"Members of Congress pressing for this bill are effectively choosing to
close the door on diplomacy, making it far more likely that we'll be left
only with a military option." [173] A representative of the Republican
Jewish Coalition as well as an employee of the Foreign Policy Initiative
confirmed that the rhetoric of the administration left war as the only
alternative to a deal with Iran.¹² One sign that Democrats would by
then most likely support a final agreement with Iran was the immense
support of a letter supporting the deal with Iran, which was sent to the
president on 3 February 2014. The letter was initiated by the Democratic
Representatives David Price and Lloyd Doggett and signed by over 100
legislators, instead of the expected 40. Amongst these were four Repub-
licans and some Jewish members [154]. "It was clear as day Democrats
were going to give them the chance to do the negotiations [with Iran],'
one AIPAC official admitted. 'The writing was on the wall at that point.
[...] It would've done no good to move forward on a fight we would lose
at White House pressure.'" [174] Confronted with the Democratic oppo-
sition AIPAC tried to call the vote off. "They don't want to be seen as
backing down [...] I don't believe this is sustainable, the confrontational
posture," Stephen Rosen, a former AIPAC employee, stated [175]. What
they did not expect was that Republican senators did not cease to push
for the bill [176]. After the Senate majority leader Harry Reid refused
to bring the bill to a vote, Senator Kirk drafted a letter signed by 42 of
the 45 Republican senators pushing for a vote on 4 February 2014 [177].
Senator Menendez sided with AIPAC in wanting to postpone the vote
because of the low chances of bipartisan support for the bill and due to
Obama's threat to veto the bill once it would pass Congress [178]. The
partisan divide supporting the administration's choice for a diplomatic
solution was a blow to AIPAC, and it certainly reduced its impact on
the decisionmaking process in regard to Iran. John Yarmuth, one of the

¹²The interviews with the representative of the Republican Jewish Coalition and
the employee of the Foreign Policy Initiative were conducted on 4 and on 8 September
2015, respectively.

Jewish members who had signed the letter in support of the Iran deal, said: "I think there is a growing sense among members that things are done just to placate AIPAC, and that AIPAC is not really working to advance what is in the interest of the United States. [...] We all took an oath of office. And AIPAC, in many instances, is asking us to ignore it." [154] Lara Friedman, a lobbyist for Americans for Peace Now, described the new balance of power as follows: "Clearly, the ground has shifted, dealing a huge defeat to AIPAC and other groups who have been aggressively lobbying for [the new sanctions bill]." [175] After the postponing of the vote on the Kirk-Menendez bill the Pro-Sanctions front turned silent: only a single Pro-Sanctions resolution was introduced at the end of the 113th Congress period. In the meantime, the administration issued seven installments of frozen Iranian assets in compliance with the interim deal. During the 114th Congress period the White House asked Pro-Israel groups to tone down their rhetoric regarding Iran and new sanctions legislation in order to not endanger the negotiations [179]. After the final agreement with Iran and the P5+1 was reached in July 2015, Obama sent the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to Congress for approval. The debate on the JCPOA ended with a failed vote on a resolution of disapproval of the deal in the Senate on 10 September 2015. In the House, the majority approved the same resolution, i.e. the disapproval of the deal, but an unprecedented 94% of the Democratic members voted against it.

In the interview results ten out of fifteen congressional staffers and all six interest group representatives named President Barack Obama's involvement in the agreement with Iran as most influential factor for the substantial shift in US foreign policy. The congressional staffers also emphasized the mutual benefit of the close cooperation between Pro-Diplomacy groups and the president in favor of the nuclear deal. According to four staffers of Democratic House members the stronger standing of Pro-Diplomacy groups provided legislators with crucial support of their position towards a diplomatic solution with Iran.¹³ One staffer added: "AIPAC is less powerful as alternative groups have appeared. J Street gets more attention now."¹⁴ Another staffer underlined that "[when] members rely on the support of Pro-Diplomacy groups, having

¹³The interviews with the staffers were conducted on 1 and on 4 September 2015, two interviews were conducted on 8 September 2015.

¹⁴The interview with the staffer was conducted on 1 September 2015.

the same side of the admin adds credibility."¹⁵ A representative of Americans for Peace Now argued that the Obama administration was more open to advocacy groups due to a lack of experts within the administration.¹⁶ A NIAC representative added that there were "lots of briefings from Pro-Diplomacy groups, every two weeks or months."¹⁷

Conclusion 8.0: In the end, President Obama managed to succeed in enforcing his biggest foreign policy achievement and changing US strategy with Iran without Republican support. As he sought assistance from the Pro-Diplomacy side in regard to their expertise, it can be assumed that these groups were needed to help push the Democratic legislators to vote in favor of a diplomatic solution with Iran. This argument has been confirmed by interviews with congressional and committee staff as well as interest group representatives.

2.5.4 Hypothesis 9: Policy Windows

The more support a policy window created by the international context lends to an interest group's goal the more successful it is in reaching its goal.

2.5.4.1 Operationalization

Policy windows may occur based on changes in the international context. These so called focusing events can create opportunities for lobby groups to push for their goals, as they can initiate a break from the status quo or put an emphasis on the status quo. In this case, there were certain events that altered the attention of the legislators in favor of either the Pro-Diplomacy groups or the Pro-Sanctions groups. These policy windows are categorized into measures directed by the Iranian regime or triggered by international involvement through the P5+1 or the UN. They are compared to the Pro-Sanctions or Pro-Diplomacy legislation of the respective Congress periods.

¹⁵The interview with the staffer was conducted on 8 September 2015.

¹⁶The interview with the representative of American for Peace Now was conducted on 3 September 2015.

¹⁷The interview with the representative of NIAC was conducted on 3 July 2017.

Congress Period	110	111	112	113	114
Pro-S Iranian Event	1	8	4	0	1
Pro-D Iranian Event	0	1	1	1	4
Pro-S Int. Involvement (+UN)	5	5	9	2	0
Pro-D Int. Involvement (+UN)	3	3	2	16	7

Table 2.12: Number of Pro-Sanctions and Pro-Diplomacy Initiatives by Iran and the International Community Between the 110th-114th Congress Periods

The Pro-Sanctions Iranian Events include essential progress in Iran’s nuclear program or discoveries of facilities or developments kept secret by the Iranian administration, missile tests and satellite launches, backing down from agreements as well as inner political changes such as the reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Pro-Diplomacy Iranian Events include indications for the halt of Iran’s nuclear program like agreements of international proposals, essential steps towards dialogue like the first official meeting with US officials and the first visit to Iran’s unofficial embassy in the United States by Iranian officials as well as the election of President Hassan Rouhani. *Pro-Sanctions International Involvement* includes UN resolutions, resolutions and reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). *Pro-Diplomacy International Involvement* includes UN resolutions in favor of the nuclear deal, P5+1 proposals, and IAEA work plans and reports. Only measures were taken into account that could be taken as milestones for either the Pro-Sanctions side or the Pro-Diplomacy side. In addition, there were two occasions when the meddling of an outside state, or more directly by Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu influenced the balance between the Pro-Sanctions and the Pro-Diplomacy side, as described in the analysis.¹⁸

The effect of the international context on the legislation can be seen in the shifts of the congressional activity in respect to Iran and will be discussed in detail later. Table 2.13 presents these changes by the number of Pro-Diplomacy (Pro-D) and Pro-Sanctions (Pro-S) resolutions introduced, passed, passed as bills, and the dead ones. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, there exist no Pro-Diplomacy resolutions that passed.

¹⁸For more details on the specific measures listed in table 2.12, see the next chapter.

Congress Period	110	111	112	113	114
Dead Pro-D Res.	4	1	1	1	1
Passed Pro-S Res.	5	2	2	1	4
Dead Pro-S Res.	5	14	9	3	17
Pro-S Res. Bills	0	1	2	0	0

Table 2.13: Overview of Resolutions Regarding Iran During the 110th-114th Congress Periods

2.5.4.2 Analysis

On the path towards the nuclear deal important policy windows created by the international context opened up opportunities for the Pro-Diplomacy groups and the Pro-Sanctions groups to push for their goals.

During the 110th Congress period, the last two years of the administration of President George W. Bush, the highest number of Pro-Sanctions resolutions were passed in the House of Representatives and the highest number of UN resolutions sanctioning Iran were issued within the selected timeframe of 2007-2016. This was a response to Iran's continuous enrichment of uranium in the years before 2007. During the 111th Congress period a rise in Iranian nuclear activities occurred, that was matched by the highest number of sanctions resolutions introduced during the 110th-113th Congress periods.

The advancement of Iran's nuclear program continued during the 112th Congress period and provoked a particularly strong increase in the number of international sanctions by the EU and UN as well as in presidential sanctions. The EU followed suit in expanding its sanctions. The low number of Pro-Sanctions resolutions passed in the House of Representatives prior to the 113th Congress period can be explained by President Obama issuing five Executive Orders that sanctioned Iran during this period, the highest amount during the 110th-114th Congress periods. At the end of the 112th Congress period Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's support of the competing Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney started to alienate Democrats from the goals of AIPAC, which is closely linked to the Likud party [180].

During the 113th Congress period Iran was very active in trying to reach a diplomatic solution, and measures by the international community as well as by President Obama had the same objective. In November 2013, the P5+1 and Iran agreed on a Joint Plan of Action. One very influential event during this time was President Hassan Rouhani's election

that played an important role in the success of Pro-Diplomacy initiatives, as he emphasized the need for improved relations with the West and, thereby, broke with the confrontative approach of his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [181]. The impact of the diplomatic endeavors was reflected in the low amount of congressional activities: In the House of Representatives only one resolution was passed sanctioning Iran and four sanctions resolutions were introduced, the lowest amount within the selected timeframe of 2007-2016.

Despite a high number of sanctions legislations introduced during the 114th Congress period threatening the nuclear deal, Pro-Diplomacy measures from the Iranian side and the international community managed to secure the agreement. One very influential event before the reaching of the agreement was the address by Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu in front of a joint session of Congress urging to stop the nuclear deal in March 2015. He broke with diplomatic protocol, as there was no prior invitation or consultation with the White House. By openly confronting President Obama, Netanyahu infuriated the Democrats of which 50 House members and 8 senators did not attend his speech in protest [182]. This may have resulted in additional support for President Obama to convince the Democratic party, as "extremely partisan issues might draw a policymaker to the fight to make sure their party's side of the story is heard." [141, p. 204].

In the interview results two congressional staffers and half of the six interest group representatives named the initiatives by the international community as one of the reasons for the shift in US foreign policy with Iran. Four out of fifteen congressional staffers named the influence of Israel's Likud party, and a couple of staffers pointed to the sophisticated Iranian nuclear program as well as President Rouhani's election as reasons for the shift in US foreign policy. Three out of six interest group representatives confirmed the latter.

Conclusion 9.0: The policy windows during the 113th-114th Congress periods opened up new opportunities for the Pro-Diplomacy groups in favor of a strategy change. Events that occurred in Iran and measures taken by the international community in favor of a diplomatic solution helped to reach the goals of the Pro-Diplomacy side. The divide between the Republicans and Democrats in regard to Iran was deepened by the polarizing actions of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The empirical data as well as the interviews conducted for this study made clear that policy windows created by the international context were an important factor for the success of the Pro-Diplomacy side.

2.5.5 Conclusion

The focus of this study is the change of US strategy towards Iran from a confrontative approach to a diplomatic approach, which occurred during the 114th Congress period with the signing of the JCPOA. The above presented findings want to answer the question which conditions facilitated lobbying success in relation to US foreign policymaking with Iran. Here, the results of this study are shortly summarized and set in context with the theoretical assumptions from the previous chapter. The analysis of the success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups will be presented in the next chapter.

2.5.5.1 Summary of Results

The conditions facilitating lobbying success were divided into two categories: the inside factors, which derived from the inner *characteristics of interest groups*, and the outside factors, which stemmed from the *domestic and international political context*. The factors of the category characteristics of interest groups include financial contributions, access to decisionmakers, the district representation of interest groups, coalition-building, and organizational strength. Based on the findings three of these factors showed more relevance to lobbying success than the remaining ones: *Financial contributions*, *coalition-building* as well as *organizational strength*.

Financial contributions are not always easily traceable. Based on the publicly available data, it could be detected that legislators who always supported sanctions generally received higher financial contributions, i.e. over \$10,000. Interest groups of the Pro-Sanctions side mostly distributed these higher contributions. During the 113th Congress period the mean amount of J Street contributions rose to the level of Pro-Israel groups. This rising strength just before J Street's official split from Pro-Israel groups like AIPAC and the group's official joining of the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period is significant as it supported the legislators voting in favor of the nuclear deal.

Comparison to theory: Financial contributions are not only controversial as a condition for lobbying success in the findings but also in the theoretical discussion. Interest groups definitely take donations to legislators

seriously. The lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy side in combination with its rising amount of contributions shows that this factor cannot be neglected.

The second relevant factor to lobbying success is *coalition-building*. The Pro-Diplomacy side spoke in a united voice and, thereby, gained a strong standing in the matter of the nuclear deal. The Pro-Diplomacy groups formed the most significant coalition in 2014, evoked by the Ploughshares Fund; amongst its members were J Street and APN as well as another active supporter of the nuclear deal, NIAC. In addition, there were joint agreements or demands on the Pro-Diplomacy side signed by APN and the Friends Committee on National Legislation, NIAC and J Street. There was no joint campaign by the Pro-Sanctions groups. Instead, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) formed the non-profit organization Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran to run a strong advertisement campaign against the JCPOA. Its budget amounted to the combined budget of eight of the biggest Pro-Diplomacy groups.

Comparison to theory: The finding coincides very well with the theoretical assumption that the forming of a strong coalition in favor or against an issue is very likely to be of relevance. The joining of resources in the face of the power of the Pro-Sanctions side was essential for the success of the Pro-Diplomacy side. However, in the years prior to the JCPOA building a coalition had not been as effective. This implies that coalition-building only leads to success in combination with other factors.

The third relevant factor of the category interest group characteristics is *organizational strength*, which is made up of lobbying expenditures, revenue, the number of members, salaries paid to the groups' staff, and the foundation year. The strength of the Pro-Sanctions side surpassed the strength of the Pro-Diplomacy side by far and supported its lobbying success between the 110th-113th Congress periods. The lobbying success in combination with the rising strength of the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period shows that this factor is essential to be effective, even though the Pro-Sanctions side's strength was still considerably higher.

Comparison to theory: The theory states that strongly organized interest groups have a better starting point regarding lobbying influence, which supports the empirical finding. The rising strength of the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period and its success in achieving a diplomatic solution with Iran underlines the importance of this factor.

The remaining factors were only partly important for the success of interest groups. The *access* interest groups have to representatives, by the means of hearings, does not always appear to lead to lobbying success. Even though the Pro-Sanctions side had always more hearings than the Pro-Diplomacy side, they failed to be successful after the 113th Congress period. In contrast, the number of hearings from the Pro-Diplomacy side was particularly low in the 114th Congress period implying that hearings did not play an important role for the striking of the deal with Iran.

Comparison to theory: The findings do not support the theoretical assumption of access as a factor of potential influence. Due to the lack of data for other means of access such as emails, calls, and personal meetings, this study had to rely on hearings as a rather unsatisfactory indicator. This signifies that the hypothesis can neither be substantially proved nor disproved.

In regard to *district representation* of an interest group, business groups will be discussed first. The number of business institutions per district with an interest in Iran might have had an impact on the voting against sanctions of the respective legislator as the following numbers suggest: 74% of the legislators voting against sanctions in comparison to about 50% of those voting in favor of them had a business operating in their district interested in trading with Iran. However, the low number of legislators voting against sanctions during the selected timeframe was not strong enough as an indicator to make out a trend. Concerning the influence of the district representation of other interest groups the only other data available was for the Jewish population. The majority of legislators had no to little Jewish population in their districts, so the percentage of the Jewish population is unlikely to have had a great impact on the voting behavior of legislators regarding Iran. In addition, the Jewish population cannot serve directly as an indicator for Jewish interest groups like AIPAC as their views have differed greatly in regard to that of Jewish Americans. This becomes particularly evident in regard to US policy with Iran, the support of President Obama, and the opposition to President Bush: "At AIPAC's 2004 convention, President George W. Bush was greeted with a rapturous reception and chants of 'four more years.' In the 2004 election, his Democratic opponent John Kerry won 76 percent of the Jewish vote. Indeed, Jews are one of the most reliably Democratic blocs in America, regardless of the individual candidates' positions on Israel." [183]

Comparison to theory: The lack of data on interest group representation

per district can neither confirm nor deny the theoretical assumption that there is a strong dependency for the legislators on their constituency.

The factors for the *domestic and international political context* include the role of the public, media attention, presidential support, and policy windows created by the international context. All of these factors are essential for the lobbying success of interest groups but the latter three are most important, this is why they are discussed first.

The high number of media publications during the 114th Congress period compared to previous Congress periods shows that the *media attention* towards Iran had risen immensely. The rise in media publications can be directly put in context with the prominent position of Iran on the political agenda. The unprecedented deal with Iran together with other outstanding events like the high involvement of the president and the divided Congress on the matter led to the high media attention. In the case for the Pro-Diplomacy groups the media helped promote their cause in favor of the JCPOA. This was very useful due to the tight budget of the groups compared to that of the Pro-Sanctions side.

Comparison to theory: The finding underlines the controversy in the literature if media attention is helpful to lobbying success. In the case of the nuclear deal with Iran, high salience did help the Pro-Diplomacy groups to raise attention to their position, which they would not have been able to achieve on their own. However, in the time before the 114th Congress period the low salience might have helped the Pro-Sanctions side to be successful.

The *presidential support* of Barack Obama has been one of the most important factors of influencing the voting behavior in favor of a diplomatic solution. With the support of the Pro-Diplomacy groups, which he frequently invited for briefings, Obama managed to convince 94% of the Democrats to vote against the disapproval of the nuclear deal and prevent new Pro-Sanctions resolutions during the 114th Congress period.

Comparison to theory: The theoretical assumption could be confirmed that having the same goal as the administration is a very strong factor for lobbying success.

Policy windows were essential for the Pro-Diplomacy side to push through their goals, as they opened up opportunities to break with the status quo and enable policy change. Iranian incentives in favor of negotiations as well as the high engagement of the international community during the

113th and 114th Congress periods provided the most important policy windows. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu's meddling with US foreign policy additionally increased the polarization in Congress pushing Democrats to support President Obama's goal.

Comparison to theory: As the theory suggests, policy windows can create a momentum for policy change because they might lead to a break from the status quo. This is made possible by altering the attention of policymakers and the public in regard to an issue. These opportunities could be confirmed to be relevant for the lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy side.

The role of *public opinion* is of importance but has less impact on direct foreign policy decisions. Even though the number of people with a favorable view on Iran did not change much, the percentage of those seeing Iran as the greatest enemy to the US did start to decrease in 2014. The public was not entirely convinced of the JCPOA as it was either rather negative or undecided. It can be assumed that the lobby groups focused mainly on legislators rather than the public, which could explain that the majority of the public stated to have received no or little information on the deal with Iran. In regard to the impact of the public's war-weariness, polls suggest that the public sentiment was against a new military endeavor during the time before the signing of the JCPOA. Portraying war as the only alternative to the JCPOA as used in the rhetoric by President Obama and the Pro-Diplomacy side might have pressured legislators to support a diplomatic solution.

Comparison to theory: The theoretical assumption that public opinion is a factor a legislator will most likely consider before making a decision is certainly true. However, to what degree the public has a direct role in US foreign policymaking could not be clearly identified based on the empirical data.

Summing up, it can be said that out of all presented factors three belonging to the characteristics of interest groups and four belonging to the domestic and international political context played a strong role in regard to the lobbying success of interest groups. For the first category these are coalition-building, organizational strength as well as financial contributions. For the second category these include media attention, the support of the president, and policy windows. Together with the interview results, these factors will be further analyzed in the next chapter in regard to their significance for lobbying success based on the political context of the congressional periods ranging from 2007-2016.

Chapter 3

Analyzing Lobbying Success in US Foreign Policy with Iran

Lobbyists are not lone actors trying to influence officials in a vacuum.

Mahoney & Baumgartner [141]

Based on the empirical data, the previous chapter investigated to what degree the selected factors contributed to the lobbying success in US-Iranian relations from 2007-2016. In the findings three significant developments became evident: For one, the former weak opposition of interest groups favoring a diplomatic solution was to a great part successful due to their alliance with President Barack Obama. In addition, the Pro-Diplomacy side gained an important political standing due to their combined resources in a coalition of over 85 organizations and 200 individuals. With the shift of the Jewish group J Street to the Pro-Diplomacy groups during the 114th Congress period, these groups also gained an important player in Middle East policy. Increased financial contributions, organizational strength, and the high level of media visibility helped to turn the coalition into a serious competitor to the Pro-Sanctions groups. Finally, favorable policy windows created by the involvement of the Iranian regime and the international community offered important opportunities to break from the status quo. Overall, the more general claim can be made that interest groups were successful when they supported

resource-limited legislators by providing expertise and assistance to pursue a shared goal.

To understand the specific role of interest groups in the US foreign policymaking process with Iran, the context of important domestic and international events is explained in the first part of the chapter. The influence of this context in regard to the changing role of interest groups is then analyzed in the second part of the chapter, which contains the final assessment of the factors confirmed in the previous chapter. The valuable insight derived from interviews with congressional House staffers, interest group representatives, and Iran experts from governmental institutions, think tanks, as well as a media outlet, is included as well.

3.1 The Role of Contextual Factors on the Domestic and International Level

The development of events from the last two years under President George W. Bush's administration through the full two terms of President Obama's administration is presented as follows in order to obtain background knowledge of the decisions behind US foreign policy with Iran. This timeline enables the tracking of events that influenced the role of interest groups involved. The context on the domestic level includes congressional activities and presidential initiatives, which are measures approved by the president; the factors on the international level demonstrate the involvement of the Iranian regime and of the international community.¹

3.1.1 110th Congress Period: Bush's Last Two Years (2007-2008)

During this time period the largest number of Iran sanctions resolutions was passed in the House of Representatives between the whole timeframe from 2007-2016 in response to Iran's nuclear activities. Internationally, substantial UN resolutions also sanctioned Iran.

¹If not stated otherwise the data is based on the Timeline of the Arms Control Association [184].

3.1.1.1 Domestic Context

In response to Iran's continuous enrichment of uranium in the years prior to 2007 five Iran sanctions resolutions were passed in the House of Representatives. In the meantime, the first formal meeting between Iranian and US diplomats occurred in May 2017.

3.1.1.2 International Context

Iran's nuclear program made further progress with the number of Iranian centrifuges rising from a few hundred to 19,000 – producing fissile material capable of building 10-12 nuclear bombs [185, p. 38]. As a response, three resolutions enacted by the UN Security Council sanctioned Iran in the beginning of 2017. In April 2017, a work plan between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran led to an improvement of the tense situation. A report of the US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) confirmed in December that Iran had halted its nuclear program.

3.1.2 111th-112th Congress Periods: Obama's First Term (2009-2012)

During the 110th-113th Congress periods the 111th Congress period stood out with members of the House of Representatives introducing the highest number of sanctions resolutions and President Obama issuing five Executive Orders, the highest number of presidential Iran sanctions during the whole period. Further sanctions by the EU, together with congressional sanctions on Iran's central bank had significant consequences for the Iranian economy, which faced a decline in oil revenues by \$40 billion, and a drop in oil exports from 2.5 million barrels in 2011 to 0.9 million barrels in September 2012. In addition, the Iranian rial lost nearly 80% of its value between 2011-2012, and Iran's GDP fell by 5-8% [186; 187, p. 464].

3.1.2.1 Domestic Context

While President Obama aimed towards a new strategy with Iran and wished for mutual respect within US-Iranian relations in his inauguration

speech, hardly a month went by without another Pro-Sanctions legislation introduced, which totaled 15 resolutions. In April 2009, the United States started to fully participate in the P5+1 talks (the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany). In June, the same month of the outbreak of the Green revolution, President Obama held a significant speech addressing Muslims in Cairo titled "A New Beginning", in which he acknowledged American wrongdoings in Iran's past and the right of each country to peaceful nuclear power in response to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's criticism of the US for denying Iran this right. Obama also underlined America's call to stop any country of having a nuclear weapon, in particular, to prevent a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. In December, the House passed the most far-reaching sanctions legislation, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2009 (CISADA). The resolution aimed at heightening the pressure on Iran's economy, in particular, by restricting gas exports to Iran.

With signing the CISADA into law in July 2010, President Obama increased the pressure on Iran to take the negotiations seriously. In addition, he issued the first of seven Executive Orders until 2013 in September. In the same month, the discovery of the Stuxnet computer virus became public, which was directed against industrial control systems by Siemens, secretly used in Iran's Bushehr plant and probably the Natanz enrichment plant. The believed-to-be US-Israeli co-project led to significant damages to Iran's nuclear program, as a fifth of Iranian centrifuges was destroyed [188]. In December 2010, Congress passed sanctions legislation as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for the 2012 budget, which for the first time targeted Iran's financial sector by blocking transactions with the Central Bank of Iran for foreign banks in order to permanently contain and isolate the country. After another Executive Order in 2011, the malware Flame was discovered to have forced Iranian officials to take oil terminals offline in May 2012. The co-project of the United States and Israel was another attempt to slow down Iran's nuclear program [189].

3.1.2.2 International Context

The path towards confrontation was supported by Iran's first satellite launch in February 2009 and, most importantly, the reelection of President Ahmadinejad in May. After supposedly fraudulent elections, the supporters of Ahmadinejad's opponent, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, protested

against the outcome starting the Green Revolution. In order not to endanger the negotiations processes, Obama remained silent and did not condemn the violence by the regime [40, p. 81-86]. In September, the discovery of a secret Uranium enrichment facility, as well as long-range missile tests, led to a strong demand for sanctions. At the end of October Iran backed down from a P5+1 proposal agreed on earlier that month. In February 2010, Iran started to produce 20% enriched uranium, the necessary degree of enrichment for building a nuclear weapon. In May 2010, Turkey and Brazil reached a deal with Iran to swap 3.5% enriched uranium for highly needed nuclear fuel to produce medical isotopes in the Tehran Research Reactor. Because the deal only concerned 1,200 kg of Iran's low-enriched uranium stockpile and did not address 20% enriched uranium, France, Russia, and the United States rejected the fuel-swap agreement. Another UN resolution tightened the weapons embargo on Iran and banned nuclear-capable ballistic missile tests in June. Despite the new sanctions, the Iranian regime announced in August that it had produced 20 kg of 20% enriched uranium and that it had completed the Bushehr nuclear power plant. In September, the IAEA reported that the uranium enrichment was on-going, and, in November, an IAEA report raised serious concerns regarding the military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program.

In May 2011, Iran's Bushehr reactor started operations, which successfully produced a sustained chain reaction. In addition, the Iranian government announced its goal to triple the production of 20% enriched uranium. The Iranian regime tested another missile in June, followed by a proposal to the IAEA to cooperate in return for an easing of sanctions. Iran produced its first nuclear fuel rod and started the enrichment in the newly completed reactor Fordow in the beginning of January 2012, while the EU banned Iranian oil imports at the end of the month. In the following months, P5+1 talks gained momentum again, and an agreement on the framework of a deal was reached in April. Several more talks were held to discuss technical details of the potential proposal. However, in August 2012, an IAEA report revealed that the number of centrifuges at the Fordow plant had increased and that Iran had produced 20% enriched uranium in excess of its needs for the Tehran Research Reactor. After the discovery of Iran's on-going nuclear activities, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to attack Iran once the amount of 20% enriched uranium would reach 250 kg in September 2012.

3.1.3 113th-114th Congress Periods: Obama's Second Term (2013-2016)

In the 113th Congress period, President Obama, together with the international community, as well as the Iranian regime, were actively pursuing a diplomatic solution. The House also held back, which is shown in the lowest amount of resolutions issued in this Congress period during the selected timeframe of 2007-2016. Sanctions legislations were increasingly passed again in the 114th Congress period, which stood in contrast to the immense efforts towards reaching a diplomatic agreement by President Obama, the international involvement, and the Iranian regime.

3.1.3.1 Domestic Context

In September 2013, President Obama directly contacted the newly elected President Hassan Rouhani, the first direct exchange between the two countries at that level. On the path towards a final agreement with Iran, Obama asked Pro-Israel groups to tone down their confrontational rhetoric and activities as not to threaten its success[190].

In April 2015 the framework of the deal was announced and the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 was passed, which forced the president to let Congress review any agreement with Iran before the lifting of sanctions. As Obama feared that Congress would not support the deal with Iran in a vote of disapproval, he threatened to veto a passed resolution of disapproval. Following the announcement of the final agreement in July 2015, Obama sent its respective documents to Congress for the ensured review. In September, at the end of the congressional review period of the final agreement with Iran, out of 46 Democratic senators 42 spoke out in favor of the deal and, thereby, blocked a resolution of its disapproval. A veto of Obama became obsolete, and a required two-thirds majority to override the veto in both chambers was improbable. The respective House resolution was passed in the House with a vote of 247-186 in favor of the disapproval of the deal. The 186 No-Votes showed an unprecedented break of the bipartisan tradition in favor of sanctions legislation and against diplomatic measures. All except two Democratic members of the House of Representatives had voted against the resolution. In the end, the congressional review period ended without passage of a resolution of approval or a resolution of disapproval of the Iran deal in both chambers. In the following months, the number of Pro-Sanctions

and Anti-Deal resolutions introduced by the House Republicans increased heavily: nine new sanctions resolutions were introduced in the House of Representatives. Beginning with the Implementation Day on 16 January 2016, President Obama waived the passed sanctions issued as Executive Orders. Secretary of State John Kerry reissued sanctions waivers in December in order to demonstrate US commitment to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) after the extension of the Iran Sanctions Act by Congress for another ten years earlier that month.

3.1.3.2 International Context

In June 2013, Hassan Rouhani was elected as Iranian President after campaigning for renewed negotiations with the West. Despite an Iranian missile test in October 2015, a violation of the 2010 UN Security Council Resolution 1929, the Iranian parliament and the Guardian Council approved the final agreement with the P5+1. In November, the P5+1 and Iran agreed on a Joint Plan of Action signed by the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Javad Zarif and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, lead P5+1 negotiator. The plan laid out an interim framework containing several steps leading up to a final solution for the nuclear deal. The US administration stuck to the agreed upon framework with the transferal of a total of seven installments of frozen Iranian assets in 2014, while Iran complied with the terms of the agreement by neutralizing its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium. The Iran talks on a final deal were taken up again in January 2015, and in February an IAEA report stated that Iran had completed the measures necessary to restrict its nuclear program and was thereby complying with the interim agreement. A month later, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress on Iran – by invitation of the Speaker of the House, John Boehner, and without prior consultation with the White House, which was seen as an obvious violation of protocol. This behavior infuriated the Democrats and widened the partisan divide in Congress: 58 Democrats, out of these eight members of the Senate and 50 members of the House, did not attend the speech.

The framework of the nuclear deal was announced in April 2015: Iran agreed to stop installing new centrifuges, halt the production of 20% enriched uranium, and stop further work at the heavy-water facility near Arak. The IAEA was to gain unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear facilities and the ability to monitor and inspect them. In return, Iran was to expect the unfreezing of \$4.2 billion of its assets and an easing

of sanctions [40, p. 244]. The agreement on the nuclear program of Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was reached on 14 July 2015 between Iran, the P5+1 and the European Union. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council incorporated the plan into law and announced to lift sanctions once key measures were taken. The IAEA and Iran also presented a roadmap for the full inspection of Iran's nuclear program. The Adoption Day on 18 October marked the official beginning of the nuclear agreement with Iran. In November, the IAEA confirmed that Iran had removed 4,500 centrifuges out of around 19,000 and decided to close its investigations over the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program in December after a 12-year long inquiry [191]. Just before the year closed, Iran started to ship 8.5 tonnes of low-enriched uranium as well as 20% enriched uranium waste to Russia in return for 140 tonnes of uranium yellowcake, which was to be used to produce uranium fuel for nuclear reactors. In February 2016, an IAEA report stated that Iran complied with the nuclear deal agreements, including the disabling of the Arak reactor. As a response to the extension of sanctions in Congress in December, Teheran announced to research and to develop nuclear propulsion for marine vessels. How the timeline of the events in the domestic and international context influenced or were influenced by the role of the involved interest groups is described as follows.

3.2 The Role of Interest Groups Leading up to the JCPOA

In respect to the impact of interest groups on US-Iranian foreign policymaking structural variables, issue salience, and actor strategies were analyzed for this study. The main argument is that interest groups were successful when they supported resource-deprived legislators by offering expertise and resources to reach a shared goal. Until the 114th Congress period, legislators made use of the Pro-Sanctions groups' expertise and organizational strength to pursue mutual goals. Once President Obama aimed for a new strategy with Iran, the former weak opposition managed to establish a new status quo in supporting the president to convince Democrats in the US Congress of a new diplomatic strategy. The policy change was possible because the Pro-Sanctions groups faced a more serious competition due to their advocacies' cooperation with the president, their role within a strong coalition, rising financial contributions and organizational strength as well as support for their message in the media.

Policy windows created by the international context provided additional opportunities for the Pro-Diplomacy side to break with the status quo.

During the times of a bipartisan House of Representatives in favor of Iran sanctions policy from the 110th-113th Congress periods, the activities of the Pro-Sanctions groups were almost unopposed. When looking at the financial contributions to legislators and the organizational strength of interest groups, including lobbying expenditures, revenue, salary levels, staff, and the foundation year (see the previous chapter), the Pro-Sanctions side surpassed the Pro-Diplomacy side by far. The interviews also underlined the organizational strength as a strong asset of the Pro-Sanctions side. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), as part of the Pro-Sanctions side, was considered as the most significant player in US-Iranian relations, according to fourteen out of fifteen interviewed congressional House staffers, as well as all six interviewed interest group representatives, and a number of policymakers ranging from former President Bill Clinton, Representative Newt Gingrich to Senator Harry Reid and more [192]. Some staffers and a former employee of AIPAC admitted that the group had drafted sanctions legislation.² The former AIPAC representative Douglas Bloomfield confirmed the lobby's activities: "It is common for members of Congress and their staffs to turn to AIPAC first when they need information, before calling the Library of Congress, the Congressional Research Service, committee staff or administration experts. [AIPAC is] often called upon to draft speeches, work on legislation, advise on tactics, perform research, collect co-sponsors and marshal votes." [97] One example is given by another former AIPAC representative who stressed the importance of the attention the group managed to raise on Iran during the Bush administration as a means of setting the political agenda.³ In the selected timeframe between 2007-2016 the Pro-Sanctions side also secured better access to legislators based on a much higher number of hearings than the Pro-Diplomacy side. Despite the efforts of the Pro-Diplomacy side in combining resources in a coalition, there was none with an important political voice.

The beginning of Barack Obama's presidency in 2009 signaled a shift in US foreign policy with Iran. The empirical data as well as the in-

²The interviews with the staffers were conducted on 31 August 2015 and on 8 September 2015. The interview with the representative of AIPAC was conducted on 11 September 2015.

³The interview with the representative of AIPAC was conducted on 11 September 2015.

interview results confirmed that the president had the greatest impact on reaching the JCPOA. In the interviews conducted for this research, ten out of fifteen congressional staffers, and all six interest group representatives, overall 76%, named the president as the most important reason for the shift in US foreign policy towards Iran. The strength of the Pro-Diplomacy groups during the 114th Congress period derived from the presidential backing, which did not only signify that President Obama supported their position, but also that he relied on their expertise and on their help in convincing the members of his party to support the JCPOA. For the Democratic members it was important that Jewish groups, like J Street or Americans for Peace Now, with credibility throughout the American Jewish community, were supporting the agreement because it made them feel safe to not be framed as anti-Semitic or being against Israel. Jeremy Ben-Ami, the founder and executive director of J Street, explained: "We're trying to redefine what it means to be pro-Israel. You don't have to be noncritical. You don't have to adopt the party line. It's not, 'Israel, right or wrong.'" [193] The stronger standing of Pro-Diplomacy groups provided legislators with crucial support of their vote in favor of a diplomatic solution with Iran, according to four staffers of Democratic members of the House.⁴ One of them confirmed, "AIPAC is less powerful as alternative groups have appeared. J Street gets more attention now."⁵ The interviewed congressional staffers emphasized the mutual benefit of the close cooperation between Pro-Diplomacy groups and the president in favor of the nuclear deal, one staffer stressed: "[When] members rely on the support of Pro-Diplomacy groups, having the same side of the admin[istration] adds credibility."⁶ A representative of Americans for Peace Now stated that the Obama administration was more open to advocacy groups and actually relied on their expertise due to a lack of experts within the administration. This was confirmed by a staffer who said that: "The White House has all the information through the interest groups." A representative of the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) confirmed that there were "lots of briefings from Pro-Diplomacy groups, every two weeks or months."⁷ Pro-Diplomacy groups gained in

⁴The interviews with the staffers were conducted on 1 and on 4 September 2015, two interviews were conducted on 8 September 2015.

⁵The interview with the staffer was conducted on 1 September 2015.

⁶The interview with the staffer was conducted on 8 September 2015.

⁷The interviews with the representative of American for Peace Now and the staffer were conducted on 3 and on 1 September 2015, respectively. The interview with the representative of NIAC was conducted on 3 July 2017.

importance the more President Obama involved them in his policy briefings and made use of their expertise.

Contributing to the rising impact of the Pro-Diplomacy groups was their increasing financial strength, the power through a strong coalition, as well as high media visibility. When J Street, a powerful financial and organizational actor in Middle East policy, switched to the Pro-Diplomacy side during the 114th Congress period the equilibrium of the interest groups involved changed. Just before the 114th Congress period, J Street had intensified its financial contributions to political candidates, with an average of spending per candidate comparable to that of AIPAC. As the number of legislators voting against sanctions were at its highest during the 113th Congress period, the financial contributions of J Street might have already supported the voting behavior of the Democrats against sanctions. During the 114th Congress period the Pro-Diplomacy groups, in particular J Street, gained a stronger financial standing, notably through the donations of the Ploughshares Fund. The power of J Street was also confirmed in the interviews: nine out of fifteen congressional House staffers and four out of six interest group representatives named J Street as one of the top players in US foreign policy with Iran.

A very influential factor for the success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups was the combining of resources in a strong coalition of over 85 organizations and 200 individuals. The Ploughshares Fund evoked the coalition in 2014; amongst its members were J Street and Americans for Peace Now as well as another active supporter of the nuclear deal, NIAC. Other partners were FCNL, MoveOn.org, Indivisible, CREDO, Win Without War, Beyond the Bomb, and Peace Action, and the Iran Project. The Pro-Sanctions side did not join forces, however, AIPAC, formed the non-profit organization Citizens for a Nuclear Free Iran in the means of orchestrating a media campaign against the Iran deal.

The high level of media attention on Iran during the 114th Congress period played into the hands of the Pro-Diplomacy groups, as they were able to use the media to promote their message. This gave them an additional tool of pressuring legislators despite the Pro-Diplomacy groups' lack of professional lobbying machinery including a significant amount of resources, be it money, personnel, members, or in terms of long-term relationships with legislators. Three interest group representatives mentioned that without the attention from the public through the media they

would not have been as successful.⁸ In addition, the success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups "exposed the diminishing power of the Israeli lobbying force that spent tens of millions of dollars to prevent the accord." [12] The representative of the Republican Jewish Coalition confirmed that AIPAC had dedicated \$20-30 million in its advertising campaign against the nuclear deal.⁹ Publicly attracting media attention stands in contrast to the usual lobbying technique of AIPAC that had in the past relied on "closed-door campaigning"¹⁰. This is reflected in the low media salience on Iran in the years prior to the nuclear deal.

An additional contributing factor to the lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups was the public's war-weariness. The rhetoric of the Obama administration and the Pro-Diplomacy groups left war as the only alternative for a deal with Iran. The general mood of war-weariness after the Iraq war supported, therefore, a peaceful solution.¹¹ Four congressional staffers, as well as a journalist of the Jewish Telegraph Agency, named the opposition to new military measures by the public as having an impact on the legislators' voting behavior.¹²

A variety of policy windows also created significant opportunities for the Pro-Diplomacy side to break from the status quo: Hassan Rouhani, who campaigned for improved relations with the United States, was elected as Iranian president in June 2013. In addition, the international community engaged strongly in renewed negotiations with Iran. On the other hand, the endorsement of Mitt Romney for president by Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2012 irritated Democratic members. His speech in front of a joint session of Congress on Iran in March 2015 warning of the potential threat of the Iran deal during a visit uncoordinated with the White House increased the polarization of the Congress. The alienation of the Democrats to Israel's administration negatively af-

⁸The interviews with the representatives of the Arms Control Association and NIAC were conducted on 1 September 2015 and on 3 July 2017, respectively. The statement of J Street can be found in an article of the Washington Post [163].

⁹The interview with the representative of the Republican Jewish Coalition was conducted on 4 September 2015.

¹⁰The interview with the staffer was conducted on 4 September 2015.

¹¹The interviews with the representative of the Republican Jewish Coalition and the employee of the Foreign Policy Initiative were conducted on 4 and on 8 September 2015.

¹²The interviews with three Democratic and one Republican staffers were conducted on 1, 2, and 8 September 2015, respectively. The interview with the journalist was conducted on 8 September 2015.

affected AIPAC who was cooperating with Likud in their joint fight against the Iran deal. One staffer of a Democratic representative remembered: "[...] A lot of members felt insulted. AIPAC decided to make a strong effort of letting the phones ring to attend [but they] misplayed it."¹³ In regard to the closeness of Likud and AIPAC, a representative of NIAC emphasized: "AIPAC went where Netanyahu went."¹⁴ The cooperation between AIPAC and Likud turned AIPAC from a bipartisan to a partisan group as their impact on Democrats decreased. A congressional staffer, the representatives of Americans for Peace Now and J Street as well as an Iran expert of the Atlantic Council confirmed this.¹⁵ A journalist of the Jewish Telegraph Agency also confirmed "there was no light between Likud and the Republican party."¹⁶ A former AIPAC member also acknowledged the damage the Israeli Prime Minister had done. An Iran expert from the Federal Academy for Security Policy of Germany stressed that Netanyahu knew he would annoy many people but wanted to make his position very clear regardless, because of the urgency he felt in order to prevent the agreement with Iran.¹⁷

Summing up, the lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups was based on their cooperation with President Obama and their mutual reliance on each other in order to reach a shared goal. Despite being the former underdog, the Pro-Diplomacy groups managed to rise on par with their adversary. With increasing financial strength as well as the combined resources in the establishment of a strong coalition, they were able to act effectively. As the Pro-Diplomacy groups were still financially disadvantaged, the high media visibility supported them in promoting their positions. Another important change originated from J Street's switching to the Pro-Diplomacy side that, thereby, gained an important and financially powerful supporter. The rising polarization within Congress ensured the success of the JCPOA as it enabled a so far unprecedented partisan divide on Iran. The polarization was increased by President

¹³The interview with the staffer was conducted on 2 September 2015.

¹⁴The interview with the representative of NIAC was conducted on 3 July 2017.

¹⁵The interviews with the staffer, the representatives of Americans for Peace Now, of J Street, and with the Iran expert of the Atlantic Council were conducted on 31 August 2015, on 3 September 2015, on 9 September 2015, and on 7 July 2017, respectively.

¹⁶The interview with the journalist was conducted on 8 September 2015.

¹⁷The interview with the representative of AIPAC was conducted on 11 September 2015. The interview with the Iran expert of the Federal Academy for Security Policy of Germany was conducted on 25 August 2017.

Obama's push against the status quo and the question of loyalty for the Democrats to support their president. Prime Minister Netanyahu's agitation against President Obama, which was supported by AIPAC, added fuel to the partisan divide. AIPAC's failure to prevent the JCPOA, as one of the most important groups in US-Iranian relations, is remarkable because they had so far been one of the most important players in US foreign policymaking in regard to Iran. For one staffer "AIPAC [...] [had] been digging this hole for a decade, as they are being more right wing and more hostile to members who are not 100% with them."¹⁸ For another staffer their failure was the "most important shift [because it showed that] AIPAC is not that infallible group and gets what it wants."¹⁹ In short, the alliance of the Pro-Diplomacy groups with President Obama was essential for their success. Obama relied on their support in the means of expertise and by persuading the Democrats. The former weak opposition then turned into a serious adversary to the Pro-Sanctions side due to the strong Pro-Deal coalition they formed. Finally, favorable policy windows due to the Iranian involvement and the engagement of the international community contributed to the ability of the Pro-Diplomacy side to break with the status quo.

¹⁸The interview with the staffer was conducted on 31 August 2015.

¹⁹The interview with the staffer was conducted on 4 September 2015.

Chapter 4

The Influence of Interest Groups on the JCPOA and the Longevity of the Deal

A lobby is like a night flower:
it thrives in the dark and dies
in the sun.

Rosen [194]

This factor-centric research set out to investigate under what conditions interest groups exerted influence on US foreign policy with Iran from 2007-2016. The study analyzed the factors linked to lobbying success, which were selected derived from the literature studying lobbying success and assessed using empirical data while taking into consideration the most relevant interest groups in the matter. The importance for this study in the field of interest group research lies in the understanding gained on policymaking processes, in which interest groups play an important role as confirmed in the findings and the conducted interviews. Interest group representatives of Americans For Peace Now (APN), the Arms Control Association, J Street, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) suggested that their actions had made an impact on policymakers. Seven out of twelve congressional staffers also acknowledged that interest groups had to a certain degree led to changes in the voting behavior of the member they had worked for.

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This dissertation fills an important gap and advances recent studies, which link lobbying success to policy outcome [30, 14, 195, 59]. This study contributes to our understanding of how structural variables, issue salience, and actor strategies are interlinked to shape policy outcomes and of the conditions under which interest groups can be successful in changing the policy status quo. The challenge of interest group research is the linking of influence to policy outcomes as well as defining and measuring influence [14, 13, 2, 143, 17]. These problems are to a high degree caused by limited availability of data, which originates from a lack in transparency in the activities of interest groups. In particular, in respect to donations and access there are few politicians or lobbyists who openly discuss these matters. An exception to the rule is Mick Mulvaney, acting interim director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and former member of the House of Representatives, when he admitted in April 2018: "If you're a lobbyist who never gave us money, I didn't talk to you. If you're a lobbyist who gave us money, I might talk to you." [196] Regarding the interest groups of this study, the official financial contributions or lobby expenditures could only be connected to a limited degree to an exact cause. Financial contributions showed precisely the money flowing from an interest group to a political candidate but without the reason behind the donation. Lobby reports, on the other hand, showed the expenditures of a group in regard to Iran but included also other issues as the cause for the expenses. The selected interest groups concentrated on only a few issues due to their limitations by size and financial power, which allowed a more substantial prediction in respect to their spending on lobbying. Because businesses have the size and financial power to spend money on a vast amount of issues, which could not be narrowed down, they were mostly excluded from the analysis. Despite being only an important sponsor for some of the Pro-Diplomacy groups, the Ploughshares Fund provided exceptionally transparent information in regard to its donations to interest groups in its annual reports. The points, which remained undocumented by the empirical data, were supplemented by the interviews that provided additional insight. A former representative of AIPAC stated: "Congressmen see dollar signs when they [AIPAC representatives] are coming."¹ The "promise [of] hefty campaign contributions to lawmakers who support AIPAC's positions [came] along with an implied threat to help fund the challengers of those who don't vote its way." [197] The danger of such strong groups is that their dominance

¹The interview with the representative of AIPAC was conducted on 11 September 2015.

leads to unequal competition, which can undermine the democratic basis of the political system. Even though policymakers can be held democratically accountable and regulations exist for interest group involvement, there are loopholes in the system. The absurdity of these loopholes is made clear by the famous lobbyist Jack Abramoff: "You can't take a congressman to lunch for \$25 and buy him a hamburger or a steak or something like that [...] But you can take him to a fund-raising lunch and not only buy him that steak but give him \$25,000 extra and call it a fund-raiser – and have all the same access and all the same interactions with that congressman." [198] This only underlines the mutual interest of lobbyists and policymakers to prevent stricter laws and close loopholes in existing legislation, which threatens democratic structures [5, p. 162-163; 59, p. 3].

4.1 Contribution to Literature

Interest groups research as the "niche field within political science" [14, p. 1-3] often focuses on single interest groups and their strategies, or mobilization tactics instead of dealing with the question of influence [143, p. 382-391]. The studies that relate interest groups to politics are focusing increasingly on the social and political context rather than on individual decisions of legislators based on the activities of interest groups. These contexts provide insight into "when, why, and to what extent [interest groups] are powerful on what types of issues" [13, p. 134]. Even though an increasing number of studies concentrates on these contexts, they do not offer a systematical analysis of various variables but examine only one or two variables [143, p. 385-389].

This study makes two important theoretical contributions to interest group research. First, it contributes to our knowledge about how a variety of factors such as structural variables, issue salience, and actor strategies work together to produce outcomes. Second, this work advances the understanding of interest group influence by identifying conditions under which interest groups can be successful in changing the policy status quo. It further contributes to recent studies, which link lobbying success to policy outcome [30, 14, 195, 59]. Since interest group research lacks not only a general theoretical perception but also an established methodological norm this study promotes the development of a standardized method to investigate lobbying success based on a tested set of factors [199, p. 293]. For a thorough analysis of lobbying success, researchers should

collaborate more to enable large-scale and longitudinal studies with the aim to systematically investigate what factors contribute to lobbying success and in which context. The findings of these studies could then be generalized to extend the analysis to a higher number of cases.

4.2 The Importance of Allies

With the end of the review period on the approval of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in September 2015, the members of the House of Representatives deviated greatly from their former bipartisan voting behavior on stopping Iran's nuclear program by implementing economic sanctions. The vote on the resolution H.R. 3460 in the 114th Congress, which was meant to prevent the JCPOA, showed for the first time an unprecedented partisan divide on the issue. The level of partisanship can be seen in the exceptional 94% of Democrats voting against the blockade of the deal and the following new sanctions resolutions in this Congress period. To explain the reasons leading up to this change in the voting behavior of legislators, this study analyzed the degree of lobbying success of interest groups and contributing factors during the times of rising US sanctions in the 110th Congress period (2007-2008) to the path towards diplomacy in the 114th Congress period (2015-2016). The focus of the study lay on the House of Representatives as this branch of government offers the most access points to interest groups.

To measure lobbying success, policy outcomes in respect to sanctions resolutions against Iran were compared to the factors stemming from two categories. In the first category, interest group characteristics, contributing factors to lobbying success were identified as financial contributions, coalition-building within interest groups and organizational strength. In the second category, domestic and international political context, relevant factors were media attention, presidential support, and policy windows created by the international context. Additional factors such as district representation, access, and public opinion could not be confirmed to have influenced policy outcome based on the available data.

The most active and financially powerful interest groups regarding US-Iranian relations were divided into two clusters: the Pro-Diplomacy groups and the Pro-Sanctions groups. The Pro-Sanctions cluster in favor of a more confrontational strategy included ACT! for America, American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), American Jewish Committee

(AJC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Bipartisan Policy Center Advocacy Network, Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), and the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC). The groups favoring diplomatic measures were Americans for Peace Now (APN), Center for Arms Control & Non-Proliferation, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and the National Foreign Trade Council Inc. The group J Street supported Iran sanctions until the 113th Congress period and then rallied for the JCPOA in the 114th Congress period. This is why the group was initially categorized as Pro-Sanctions and later as Pro-Diplomacy. The most important factors for the lobbying success of the groups involved are sorted by relevance based on the analyzed data for this study as follows.

Presidential support for a diplomatic solution with Iran played a major role and led to a partisan voting behavior in the US Congress. The loyalty of the Democrats to their president, who for the first time in US-Iranian relations went against the majority view of the Congress in favor of Iran sanctions legislation, was not an easy given. This explains why President Obama sought assistance from the Pro-Diplomacy side in regard to their expertise and in convincing legislators. Due to President Obama's unpopularity at the time, he alone might have not been able to gain the backing of his party to support the deal [32]. Having Jewish groups on board, such as J Street, ensured the legislators that they did not have to fear to be framed as anti-Semitic or being against Israel. The rhetoric of President Barack Obama and Pro-Diplomacy groups presenting war as the only other option to the JCPOA was another significant factor because the legislators might have felt pressured by their constituents to oppose yet another war due to a general public war-weariness at the time.

For the Pro-Diplomacy groups, the factors coalition-building, financial contributions, organizational strength, and high media visibility increased their importance in the cooperation with President Obama. The Ploughshares Fund had evoked a coalition that connected over 85 organizations and 200 individuals and gave the Pro-Diplomacy groups a very strong political voice. The combined resources increased their financial contributions and organizational strength, which was, amongst others, supported by the contributions of the Ploughshares Fund. Assistance by the media to spread their message also contributed to the lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy groups despite still being financially and organizationally disadvantaged to the Pro-Sanctions groups.

The factor policy windows created by the international context supported the lobbying success of the Pro-Diplomacy side as certain events created

opportunities for these groups to break from the status quo: The election of Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, a strong supporter of renewed negotiations with the West, was as important as the determination of the international community to prevent further substantial advancements in Iran's nuclear program in pushing for an imminent solution in the P5+1 talks. Another focusing event occurred when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a visit uncoordinated with the White House, spoke before a joint session of Congress warning of the potential threat of an agreement with Iran months before its official announcement in 2015. His previous endorsement of the Republican candidate Mitt Romney for president in 2012 did also not help to win over the Democrats. Prime Minister Netanyahu's actions not only intensified the partisan divide in Congress but also undermined the bipartisanship of AIPAC, which used to be a foundation for the group's success.

In total there were three significant developments leading to the path towards diplomacy: For one, the former weak opposition of interest groups favoring a diplomatic solution was to a great part successful due to the alliance with President Obama. In addition, the Pro-Diplomacy side gained an important political standing due to the joining of resources in a strong coalition. Increased financial contributions, organizational strength, and the high level of media visibility turned the coalition into a serious competitor to the Pro-Sanctions groups. Finally, favorable policy windows created by the involvement of the Iranian regime and the international community offered important opportunities to break from the status quo. Overall, the more general claim could be made that interest groups had been successful when they supported resource-strained legislators by providing expertise and assistance to pursue a mutual goal.

4.3 The Future of US-Iranian Relations

The question is what impact the JCPOA signifies for future relations between Iran and the United States. The shift of the United States from a policy of confrontation towards a policy of diplomacy with Iran aimed to bring about more moderate relations between the two countries. Since the implementation of the nuclear deal Iran fulfilled its commitments according to the JCPOA: Iran allowed inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to its nuclear sites, the regime abstained from mounting newly developed centrifuges in nuclear plants, and stopped its program at the Arak nuclear facility [200, p. 4]. The

IAEA confirmed that Iran downgraded its nuclear program: The Iranian stockpile of low-enriched uranium shrank to 88.4 kg, under a third of what was allowed under the JCPOA, and the amount of heavy water also stayed below the agreed limits [201]. In return for the halt of Iran's nuclear program, the United States had unfrozen \$30 billion of Iran's financial assets from a total of about \$100-\$125 billion. Iran's weakened economy started to recover with a return of the oil production to pre-sanctions levels of 3.85 million barrels per day, of which almost half were exported. Foreign direct investment totaled to \$11 billion, the highest annual level in almost 20 years, trade with the EU increased by 42%, and inflation dropped from 45% in 2013 to 8% in 2016 [202]. However, the recovery of the economy had been slow, as banks had not returned to do business with Iran because of the insecurity of the lifting of US sanctions; also, most of the other sanctions were still in place with a few exceptions for civilian aviation, humanitarian goods, caviar, pistachios, and carpets [203]. Corruption, the continuation of sanctions, and the return of high inflation stopped the economic recovery and led to a crisis shown by an unemployment rate of 40% and an estimated 50% of the population living in poverty. This situation sparked immense political unrest amongst the Iranian people in the beginning of 2018.

In May 2018, President Donald Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Iran deal. By revoking the orders of his predecessor Barack Obama, he aimed for improved relations with the two strongest opponents of the deal: Israel, which is reflected in the controversial move of the US embassy to Jerusalem, and Saudi-Arabia, which can be seen in the 2017 US arms sale to the Sunni state. The United States started re-imposing Iran sanctions in August 2018 on the trade with gold, precious metals, and the automotive industry. In November, sanctions on Iran's oil trade as well the banking sector were reestablished. The sanctions did not only exclude companies doing business with Iran from trading with the United States but also punished US companies for trading with third parties dealing with Iran based on secondary sanctions [204]. Iran's currency, the rial, so far lost 70% of its value since April 2018, and prices escalated for imported goods due to their scarcity [205]. Iranian oil exports dropped from 2.4 million in early 2018 to around 1.3 million barrels a day, which could, in the end, lead to a 2% cut of global oil supplies [206]. Due to an increase of Saudi oil production prices have not increased as a result, which emphasizes the dependency on the Sunni state [207].

Meanwhile, the EU introduced a mechanism to protect business in the framework of the JCPOA [208]. With a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)

the EU set up a payment system designed to circumvent the US financial market. In addition, a blocking statute meant to shield European companies from punishment, as it would nullify legal measures by the United States [204]. However, European companies interested in trading with Iran might still not rely on these European measures because of powerful punishments such as the exclusion from the American market. The confrontational course between Iran and the United States could also weaken the standing of the United States in case the EU as well as countries such as India, China, and Turkey, with temporary waivers to continue to buy Iranian oil for the first six months of 2019, continue to trade with Iran [209]. Meanwhile, Iran turned to Russia for a stronger political and military cooperation. This became evident in allowing Russia to temporarily use Iran's airbase on the way to Syria and Iran's acceptance of Russia's bid to build eight of nineteen nuclear power plants in 2014 [210, p. 5].

The importance of Iran's role in current and future conflicts remains due to the influence of its Shiite militia in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. However, considering Iran more than a partner in the fight against terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seems unlikely due to the power struggle between Iran, as representative of the biggest Shia state in the Middle East and the Arab countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, as representative of the Salafi/Wahabi component of Sunni Islam. The 2017 arms deal with Saudi Arabia, the withdrawal from the Iran deal in 2018, and the continued reliance on Saudi oil as the second biggest supplier to the United States signified a strengthening of the Sunni state under the Trump administration. The potential increase in conflict potential might lead to a destabilizing counterbalance for the whole Middle East and a damage to world economies [211; 212; 50; 213, p. 131; 214, p. 19]. In addition, Iran "will continue to remind the international community that if the deal collapses or it no longer benefits Iran, it can ramp up its nuclear activity," warns Kelsey Davenport of the Arms Control Association [215]. Accepting Iran as a partner in the international community would contribute to the stabilization of the region and enable trade with a more secure Middle East, which would be more profitable to the American economy than costly investments in military endeavors [216, p. 1; 214, p. 11].

President Trump's revoking of the Iran agreement has so far unified the Democrats in their support of the deal. One example is Senator Chuck Schumer who opposed the withdrawal from the agreement without a violation of the Iranians, despite that he had once voted against the JCPOA [217]. With the re-taking of the House of Representatives

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for the Democrats in the 2018 mid-term elections interest groups might have gained more allies to push for the United States' return to the Iran deal. To override a presidential veto on any such resolution a two-thirds majority in both chambers of Congress would, however, be necessary. This seems highly unlikely given the division in the Senate with about 50% Democrats and Republicans, and most Republicans supporting the withdrawal. The Pro-Diplomacy groups might wait for a more favorable administration to improve their chances of success. Either way, the question of lobbying success will continue to be of importance for future US-Iranian relations and US foreign policy as a whole.

Appendix

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Interest Group Representatives

1. What kind of work are you doing and what are you trying to accomplish?
2. Why is it necessary to move forward on US foreign policy with Iran?
3. How do you lobby in specific?
4. What is standing in your way? What arguments do you often hear?
5. How is your organization using research when you communicate with other organizations or public officials? Do you rely a lot on research? Do you do much research in-house?
6. How are you organized in terms of people and units that are involved in public affairs and advocacy?
7. Could you tell me about yourself and how you came to work at this organization?
8. In regard to US foreign policy with Iran, how do you lobby in specific?
9. Who are the major players in regard to US foreign policy with Iran?
10. Do you target representatives of the House in favor of, against the interest groups' goals, or when she/he is undecided?
11. How would you rate the influence of each of the interest groups you mentioned on a scale of 1-10 (1 is least important, 10 is most important)?
12. Does your lobbying activity change the way a representative voted on Iran resolutions?

Questionnaire for Interest Group Representatives

13. How frequently do you meet with representatives?
14. How would you rate the success rate of Pro-Diplomacy initiatives in regard to Iran on a scale of 1-10 (1 is least successful, 10 is most successful)?
15. How did the shift in US foreign policy towards Iran come about? What conditions changed prior to the agreement of the nuclear deal?
16. Has there been a shift in the influence of lobby groups?
17. How would you rate the shift in US foreign policy as a result of lobbying activities on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 is least likely, 10 is most likely)?
18. Do Pro-Diplomacy lobby groups or Pro-Sanctions groups get more or less attention now? Why?
19. To what extent is Iran a matter of party policy?
20. Is there anyone else I should speak to in regard to this issue?

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Congressional Staffers

1. What are the differences among interest groups lobbying in regard to foreign policy and domestic policy?
2. Who are the major players in regard to US foreign policy with Iran?
3. How do they lobby in specific?
4. Do lobby groups target representatives in favor of, against the interest groups' goals, or when she/he is undecided?
5. How would you rate the influence of each of the interest groups you mentioned on a scale of 1-10 (1 is least important, 10 is most important)?
6. In regard to the most influential interest group you mentioned in US foreign policy with Iran, did its lobbying activity change the way the representative you worked for voted on Iran resolutions?
[Left out for interviews with committee staffers]
7. How would you describe your personal/your representative's relationship to this interest group? How frequently did you meet?
[Asked only for personal relationship in interviews with committee staffers]
8. Did the lobbying activity affect the voting behavior of other representatives to your knowledge?
9. How would you rate the success rate of Pro-Diplomacy initiatives in regard to Iran on a scale of 1-10 (1 is least successful, 10 is most successful)?
10. Generally speaking, do you know of successful lobbying activities that target national security issues if they are contrary to the position of Congress?

Questionnaire for Congressional Staffers

11. How did the shift in US foreign policy towards Iran come about? What conditions changed prior to the agreement of the nuclear deal?
12. Has there been a shift in the influence of lobby groups?
13. How would you rate the shift in US foreign policy as a result of lobbying activities on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 is least likely, 10 is most likely)?
14. Do Pro-Diplomacy lobby groups or Pro-Sanctions groups get more or less attention now? Why?
15. To what extent is Iran a matter of party policy?
16. Is there anyone else I should speak to in regard to this issue?

Appendix C

Python Source Code

```
import csv
import datetime
import random

class miList:
    """Stores the data to model."""
    def __init__(self, name, minvalue, maxvalue):
        self.data = []
        self.elName = name
        self.minvalue = minvalue
        self.maxvalue = maxvalue

    def set_name(self, name):
        self.elName = name

    def add_data(self, value):
        self.data.append(value)

    def isVote(self, nr):
        return (self.data[nr]=="1") or (self.data[nr]=="2")

    def set_value(self, nr, val):
        self.data[nr]=val

    def get_data_array(self):
        """Returns data set with real values"""
        converted_data = []
        for x in self.data:
            converted_data.append(x*(self.maxvalue-self.minvalue
                ↪)+self.minvalue)
        return converted_data

    def get_value(self, nr):
```

Python Source Code

```
        """Returns the normalized value at position nr
        :param nr: position of the value in data set """
        if (len(self.data) > nr) and (nr > -1):
            return self.data[nr]

    def get_length(self):
        return len(self.data)

    def get_name(self):
        """returns the name of the data"""
        return self.elName

class importMi:

    def __init__(self):
        self.data = []
        random.seed(datetime.datetime.now())
        self.selection = []

    def resetSelection(self):
        self.selection=range(0,self.data[3].get_length())
        print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

    def selectResolution (self, resolution):
        newselection=[]
        for n in self.selection:
            if (self.data[1].get_value(n) in resolution):
                newselection=newselection+[n]
        self.selection=newselection
        print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

    def printList(self, list):
        for n in list:
            self.printLegislatorByNr(n)

    def removeItems(self, list):
        newselection=[]
        for n in self.selection:
            if not (n in list):
                newselection += [n]
        self.selection = newselection

    def printPattern(self, row):
        names=[]
        for n in self.selection:
            names=names+[self.data[3].get_value(n)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(n)]
        names=list(set(names))
        for na in names:
            pat = []
            for n in self.selection:
                if (na==self.data[3].get_value(n)+self.data[5].
                    ↪ get_value(n)):
                    pat=pat+[str(self.data[2].get_value(n))+ "␣(" +
                        ↪ str(self.data[row].get_value(n))+")"]
            print(na+" :␣"+str(sorted(pat)))

    def printSelection(self):
```

Python Source Code

```
    for n in self.selection:
        self.printLeg(n)
    print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

def selectProContr(self, proC):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        if(float(self.data[6].get_value(n))>proC):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=newselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def selectOppContr(self, oppC):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        if(float(self.data[7].get_value(n))>oppC):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=newselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def selectVote(self, vote):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        if(float(self.data[9].get_value(n))==vote):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=newselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def selectBusiness(self, business):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        busi=0
        if (self.data[17].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[18].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[19].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[20].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (busi >= business):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=newselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def printYes(self):
    y=0
    for x in self.selection:
        if self.data[9].get_value(x) == "1":
            y=y+1
    print ("Number:␣"+str(y))
```

Python Source Code

```
def printNo(self):
    y=0
    for x in self.selection:
        if self.data[9].get_value(x) == "2":
            y=y+1
    print ("Number:␣"+str(y))

def printMicksYes(self):
    y=0
    for x in self.selection:
        if self.data[9].get_value(x) == "1":
            y=y+1

    z=0
    for x in self.selection:
        if self.data[9].get_value(x) == "2":
            z=z+1
    print ("Number:␣"+str(y)+ " ,␣Number:␣"+str(z))

def YesNo(self):
    self.printYes()
    self.printNo()

def makeMoneyDiff(self):
    for x in range(0,self.data[8].get_length()):
        if self.data[1].get_value(x)=='110':
            self.data[len(self.data)-1].set_value(x,0)

    reso=['111','112','113']
    prevPer="110"
    for nowPer in reso:
        for x in range(0,self.data[8].get_length()):
            if self.data[1].get_value(x)==nowPer:
                na=self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(x)
                if (self.getMoney(na, prevPer)!=-1):
                    self.data[len(self.data)-1].set_value(x,(-self
                    ↪ .getMoney(na, prevPer)+self.data[8].
                    ↪ get_value(x))/self.getMoney(na, prevPer)
                    ↪ )
                else:
                    self.data[len(self.data)-1].set_value(x,0)
            prevPer=nowPer

def getMoney(self, name, res):
    money=-1
    for x in range(0,self.data[8].get_length()):
        if self.data[1].get_value(x)==res:
            if (self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
            ↪ get_value(x)==name):
                money=self.data[8].get_value(x)
    if money==0:
        money=-1
    return money

def getVoteDiff_Res(self):
```

Python Source Code

```
    returnval=[]
    reso=['110','111','112','113']
    for res in reso:
        money=0
        counter=0
        for x in self.selection:
            if self.data[1].get_value(x)==res:
                if self.data[9].get_value(x)!="":
                    if (float(self.data[9].get_value(x)) < 3):
                        money+=(float(self.data[9].get_value(x))-1)
                        counter+=1
        if counter>0:
            money/=counter
        else:
            money=-1
        returnval+=[1-money]

    return returnval

def getMoney_Res(self):
    returnval=[]
    reso=['110','111','112','113']
    for res in reso:
        money=0
        counter=0
        for x in self.selection:
            if self.data[1].get_value(x)==res:
                money+=self.data[8].get_value(x)
                counter+=1
        if counter>0:
            money/=counter
        else:
            money=-1
        returnval+=[money]

    return returnval

def getMoneyDiff_Res(self):
    returnval=[]
    reso=['110','111','112','113']
    for res in reso:
        money=0
        counter=0
        for x in self.selection:
            if self.data[1].get_value(x)==res:
                money+=self.data[len(self.data)-1].get_value(x)
                counter+=1
        if counter>0:
            money/=counter
        else:
            money=-1
        returnval+=[money]

    return returnval

def selectJPopl(self, jPop):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
```

Python Source Code

```
        if(self.data[16].get_value(n)==""):
            popl=-1
        else:
            popl=float(self.data[16].get_value(n).strip('%').
                ↪ replace(',','.'))/100.
        if (popl==-1 or popl>jPop):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
        self.selection=newselection
        print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def selectYesVotes(self):
    numbr=0
    yesselection=[]
    for x in self.selection:
        if(self.data[9].get_value(x) == "1"):
            yesselection=yesselection+[x]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=yesselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def selectNoVotes(self):
    numbr=0
    noselection=[]
    for x in self.selection:
        if(self.data[9].get_value(x) == "2"):
            noselection=noselection+[x]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=noselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def countRes(self, xnr):
    tttt=[]
    for x in range(0,len(self.selection)):
        xx=self.selection[x]
        if not (self.data[xnr].get_value(xx) in tttt):
            tttt=tttt+[self.data[xnr].get_value(xx)]
    print (str(len(tttt)))
    print (tttt)

def selectWW(self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in range(0,len(self.selection)):
        xx=self.selection[x]
        for y in range(x+1, len(self.selection)):
            yy=self.selection[y]
            if (self.data[3].get_value(xx)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(xx) == self.data[3].get_value(yy)+
                ↪ self.data[5].get_value(yy)):
                if (self.data[9].get_value(xx) != self.data[9].
                    ↪ get_value(yy)):
                    newselection=newselection+[xx]+[yy]

    self.selection=list(set(newselection))
    print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

def selectWWChangedOnlyOnce(self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in range(0,len(self.selection)):
```


Python Source Code

```
ww=0
res=0
xx=self.selection[x]
tmp=[]
for y in range(x+1, len(self.selection)):
    yy=self.selection[y]
    if (self.data[3].get_value(xx)+self.data[5].
        ↪ get_value(xx) == self.data[3].get_value(yy)+
        ↪ self.data[5].get_value(yy)):
        if (self.data[9].get_value(xx) != self.data[9].
            ↪ get_value(yy)):
            tmp=tmp+[xx]+[yy]
            ww+=1
if (ww==1):
    newselection=newselection+tmp

self.selection=list(set(newselection))
print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.newselection)))

def selectGW(self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in range(0,len(self.selection)):
        y=0
        gw=2
        templi=[]
        xx=self.selection[x]
        while y < len(self.selection):
            yy=self.selection[y]
            if yy != xx:
                if (self.data[3].get_value(xx)+self.data[5].
                    ↪ get_value(xx) == self.data[3].get_value(yy
                    ↪ )+self.data[5].get_value(yy)):
                    if (self.data[9].get_value(xx) != self.data
                        ↪ [9].get_value(yy)):
                        gw=1
                else:
                    templi=templi+[xx]+[yy]
            y=y+1
        if (gw==2):
            newselection=newselection+templi
    self.selection=list(set(newselection))
    print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

def selectEW(self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in range(0,len(self.selection)):
        y=0
        gw=2
        templi=[]
        xx=self.selection[x]
        while y < len(self.selection):
            yy=self.selection[y]
            if yy != xx:
                if (self.data[3].get_value(xx)+self.data[5].
                    ↪ get_value(xx) == self.data[3].get_value(yy
                    ↪ )+self.data[5].get_value(yy)):
                    gw=1
```

```

        y=y+1
        if (gw==2):
            newselection=newselection+[xx]
        self.selection=list(set(newselection))
        print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

def deleteDoublesSel (self, sel):
    newselection=[]
    for x in sel:
        ispart=False
        for y in newselection:
            if (self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(x) == self.data[3].get_value(y)+
                ↪ self.data[5].get_value(y)):
                ispart=True
        if not(ispart):
            newselection=newselection+[x]
    return list(set(newselection))

def getMaxContr(self, sel, name, row):
    value=0
    res=[]
    for x in sel:
        if ((self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
            ↪ get_value(x) == name) and not (self.data[1].
            ↪ get_value(x) in res)):
            value+=self.data[row].get_value(x)
            res+=[self.data[1].get_value(x)]
    return value

def deleteDoubles (self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in self.selection:
        ispart=False
        for y in newselection:
            if (self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(x) == self.data[3].get_value(y)+
                ↪ self.data[5].get_value(y)):
                ispart=True
        if not(ispart):
            newselection=newselection+[x]
    self.selection=list(set(newselection))
    print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

def deleteDoublePerRes (self):
    newselection=[]
    for x in self.selection:
        ispart=False
        for y in newselection:
            if (self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(x)+self.data[1].get_value(x) ==
                ↪ self.data[3].get_value(y)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(y)+self.data[1].get_value(y)):
                ispart=True
        if not(ispart):
            newselection=newselection+[x]
    self.selection=list(set(newselection))
    print("Number:␣"+str(len(self.selection)))

```

Python Source Code

```
def printByCategoryMax(self, sel, cats, row):
    catfin=[]
    for n in range(0, len(cats)-1):
        catTemp=[]
        for x in range(0, len(sel)):
            xx=sel[x]
            if ((float(self.getMaxContr(sel, self.data[3].
                ↪ get_value(xx)+self.data[5].get_value(xx), row
                ↪ ))>cats[n]) and (float(self.getMaxContr(sel,
                ↪ self.data[3].get_value(xx)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(xx), row))<=cats[n+1])):
                catTemp=catTemp+[xx]

        print ("Category_" + str(n)+":_" +str(len(catTemp))+
            ↪ _Elements_" + str(cats[n]) + ", " +str(cats[n]
            ↪ +1]) +")")
        #for x in catTemp:
            #self.printLegislatorByNr(x)
        catfin=catfin+[catTemp]
    temp=0
    for x in catfin:
        temp+=len(x)
    print ("total:_" + str(len(sel)) + "_Sum:_" +str(temp))
    return catfin

def printByCategory(self, sel, cats, row):
    catfin=[]
    for n in range(0, len(cats)-1):
        catTemp=[]
        for x in range(0, len(sel)):
            xx=sel[x]
            if ((float(self.data[row].get_value(xx))>cats[n])
                ↪ and (float(self.data[row].get_value(xx))<=
                ↪ cats[n+1])):
                catTemp=catTemp+[xx]

        print ("Category_" + str(n)+":_" +str(len(catTemp))+
            ↪ _Elements_" + str(cats[n]) + ", " +str(cats[n]
            ↪ +1]) +")")
        #for x in catTemp:
            #self.printLegislatorByNr(x)
        catfin=catfin+[catTemp]
    temp=0
    for x in catfin:
        temp+=len(x)
    print ("total:_" + str(len(sel)) + "_Sum:_" +str(temp))
    return catfin

def printByParty(self, sel):
    catfin=[]
    cats=['R', 'D']
    for nc in range(0, len(cats)):
        catTemp=[]
        for x in range(0, len(sel)):
            n=sel[x]
            if (self.data[4].get_value(n)==cats[nc]):
                catTemp=catTemp+[n]

        print ("Category_" + str(nc)+":_" +str(len(catTemp))+
```

Python Source Code

```
        ↪ "␣Elements␣("+ str(cats[nc]) +)")"
    #for x in catTemp:
        #self.printLegislatorByNr(x)
    catfin=catfin+[catTemp]
temp=0
for x in catfin:
    temp+=len(x)
print ("total:␣" + str(len(sel)) + "␣Sum:␣"+str(temp))
return catfin

def printByBusiness(self, sel,cats):
    catfin=[]
    for nc in range(0, len(cats)-1):
        catTemp=[]
        for x in range(0,len(sel)):
            n=sel[x]
            busi=0
            if (self.data[17].get_value(n)!=""):
                busi=busi+1
            if (self.data[18].get_value(n)!=""):
                busi=busi+1
            if (self.data[19].get_value(n)!=""):
                busi=busi+1
            if (self.data[20].get_value(n)!=""):
                busi=busi+1
            if ((float(busi)>cats[nc]) and (float(busi)<=cats[
                ↪ nc+1])):
                catTemp=catTemp+[n]

        print ("Category␣" + str(nc)+":␣"+str(len(catTemp))+
            ↪ "␣Elements␣("+ str(cats[nc]) + ", " +str(cats[
            ↪ nc+1]) +)")"
        #for x in catTemp:
            #self.printLegislatorByNr(x)
    catfin=catfin+[catTemp]
temp=0
for x in catfin:
    temp+=len(x)
print ("total:␣" + str(len(sel)) + "␣Sum:␣"+str(temp))
return catfin

def selectParty(self, party):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        if(self.data[4].get_value(n)==party):
            newselection=newselection+[n]
            numbr=numbr+1
    self.selection=newselection
    print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def printLegs(self, vot,proC, oppC, jPop, business):
    numbr=0
    newselection=[]
    for n in self.selection:
        if(float(self.data[6].get_value(n))>proC):
            if (float(self.data[7].get_value(n))>oppC):
```

Python Source Code

```
        if (self.data[16].get_value(n)==""):
            popl=-1
        else:
            popl=float(self.data[16].get_value(n).strip('%'
                ↪ ').replace(',','.'))/100.
        busi=0
        if (self.data[17].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[18].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[19].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (self.data[20].get_value(n)!=""):
            busi=busi+1
        if (busi >= business):
            if (popl== -1 or popl > jPop):
                if (self.data[9].get_value(n)==vot):
                    newselection=newselection+[n]
                    numbr=numbr+1
        self.selection=newselection
        print("Number:␣"+str(numbr))

def printLegislatorByName(self, name):
    for n in range(0, self.data[3].get_length()):
        if (self.data[3].get_value(n)==name):
            self.printDetails(n)

def printLegislatorByNr(self, nr):
    self.printLegislatorByName(self.data[3].get_value(nr))

def printLeg(self, n):
    print(str(n)+":␣"+self.data[3].get_value(n)+"␣("+self.
        ↪ data[4].get_value(n)+"/"+self.data[1].get_value(
        ↪ n)+")␣"+ "Contributions:␣"+str(self.data[6].
        ↪ get_value(n))+"/"+str(self.data[7].get_value(n))
        ↪ +"␣J:␣"+self.data[16].get_value(n))

def printDetails(self, n):
    strt = str(n)+":␣";
    for i in range(0, len(self.data)):
        strt=strt+"␣-␣"+str(self.data[i].get_value(n))
    print(strt)

def resetContr(self):
    for n in range(0, self.data[2].get_length()):
        self.data[6].set_value(n,0)
        self.data[7].set_value(n,0)
        self.data[8].set_value(n,0)

def getleg_name(self, n):
    return self.data[3].get_value(n)+self.data[5].
        ↪ get_value(n)

def printContrLeg(self, name):
    for n in range(0, self.data[3].get_length()):
        if (self.getleg_name(n)==name):
            print(self.data[1].get_value(n)+":␣"+ "Pro:␣"+str(
                ↪ self.data[6].get_value(n))+ "Contr:␣"+str(
```

Python Source Code

```
        ↪ self.data[7].get_value(n))+str(self.
        ↪ data[8].get_value(n)))

def printContr(self,n):
    print ("Pro:␣"+str(self.data[6].get_value(n))+str(␣
        ↪ "+str(self.data[7].get_value(n))+str(␣
        ↪ self.data[8].get_value(n)))

def set_Contr(self, n, contribution):
    self.data[6].set_value(n,float(self.data[6].get_value(
        ↪ n))+contribution[0])
    self.data[7].set_value(n,float(self.data[7].get_value(
        ↪ n))+contribution[1])
    self.data[8].set_value(n,float(self.data[8].get_value(
        ↪ n))+contribution[0]+contribution[1])

def addContrFromFile(self, filen,congrperiode):
    print("open␣file:␣" + filen)

    contr = importContri()
    contr.open_csv_file(filen)
    for n in range(0, self.data[2].get_length()):
        if (self.data[1].get_value(n)==congrperiode):
            c=contr.return_Contri(self.data[5].get_value(n))
            self.set_Contr(n,c)

def open_csv_file(self, filename):
    f = open(filename, "rU")

    # get length of the csv file
    nrlines = len(f.readlines())
    f.seek(0)
    print(str(nrlines))
    reader = csv.reader(f, delimiter=";")

    if nrlines > 0:
        elementnames = next(reader)
        print(elementnames)
        for el in elementnames:
            self.data.append(MiList.miList(el, 0, 1))

    self.data.append(MiList.miList("GeldDiff", 0, 1))
    for row in reader:
        if (row[9]=="3") and (row[10]=="1"):
            row[9]="1"
        if (row[9]=="3") and (row[10]=="2"):
            row[9]="␣"

        if (row[16]==""):
            row[16]="-1"

        if(row[11]=='''):
            row[11]='0'

        if (row[9] == "1") or (row[9] == "2") or (row[9] ==
            ↪ "3"):
            for i in range(0, len(row)):
                self.data[i].add_data(row[i].strip('\'').replace(
                    ↪ ',','.'))
```

Python Source Code

```
        self.data[len(self.data)-1].add_data(-1)
    print("Imported_lines:_" + str(self.data[3].get_length
        ↪ ()))

def get_AbgeordneteVsJBevoelkerung(self):
    print(self.data[16].get_name())
    votesY=[0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0]
    votesN=[0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0]
    population=[0,0.1,0.2,0.3,0.4,0.5,0.6,0.7,0.8,0.9,1]
    for i in range(0,self.data[3].get_length()):
        if (self.data[9].isVote(i)) and (self.data[16].
            ↪ get_value(i)!=""):
            popl=float(self.data[16].get_value(i).strip('%')
            ↪ .replace(',','.'))/100.
    for j in range(1, len(population)):
        if (self.data[1].get_value(i)=="111"):
            if (popl>=population[j-1]) and (popl<population[j
            ↪ ]):
                if (self.data[9].get_value(i)=="1"):
                    votesY[j-1]=votesY[j-1]+1
                else:
                    votesN[j-1]=votesN[j-1]+1
    print(population)
    print(votesY)
    print(votesN)

def get_Duplicates(self):
    yestono =0
    notoyes=0
    repsYN = 0
    demsYN = 0
    repsNY = 0
    demsNY = 0
    nonevoting=0
    spenden = 0
    spendennr=0
    for x in range(0, self.data[3].get_length()):
        y=x+1
        while y < self.data[3].get_length():
            if (self.data[3].get_value(x)+self.data[5].
                ↪ get_value(x) == self.data[3].get_value(y)+
                ↪ self.data[5].get_value(y)):
                if (self.data[9].get_value(x) != self.data[9].
                    ↪ get_value(y)):
                    if self.data[9].get_value(x)!="3":
                        if self.data[9].get_value(x)=="1":
                            yestono=yestono+1
                            if self.data[4].get_value(x) == "R":
                                repsYN=repsYN+1
                            if self.data[4].get_value(x) == "D":
                                demsYN=demsYN+1
                    else:
                        notoyes=notoyes+1
                        spenden=spenden+float(self.data[8].
                            ↪ get_value(y)) - float(self.data[8].
                            ↪ get_value(x))
                        spendennr = spendennr+1
                        if self.data[4].get_value(x) == "R":
                            repsNY=repsNY+1
                        if self.data[4].get_value(x) == "D":
```

Python Source Code

```
        demsNY=demsNY+1
        print(self.data[8].get_value(x) + "__" + str(
            ↪ self.data[8].get_value(y)))
        y=self.data[3].get_length()
        y=y+1
    print("Reps_□yes_□to_□no:□" + str(repsYN))
    print("Reps_□no_□to_□yes:□" + str(repsNY))
    print("Dem_□yes_□to_□no:□" + str(demsYN))
    print("Dem_□no_□to_□yes:□" + str(demsNY))
    print(str(spenden/spendenr))

def return_Dupl(self):
    self.data[3].get_Duplicates()

def return_complete_dataset(self):
    return self.data

class importContri:

    def __init__(self):
        self.data = []
        random.seed(datetime.datetime.now())

    def open_csv_file(self, filename):
        f = open(filename, "rU")

        # get length of the csv file
        nrlines = len(f.readlines())
        f.seek(0)

        reader = csv.reader(f, delimiter=";")

        if nrlines > 0:
            elementnames = next(reader)
            for el in elementnames:
                self.data.append(MiList.miList(el, 0, 1))

        for row in reader:
            name = ""

            for i in range(0, len(row)):

                self.data[i].add_data(row[i])

        print("Imported_□lines:□" + str(self.data[3].get_length
            ↪ ()))

    def return_Contri(self, LegName):
        contrPro = 0
        contrCont=0
        for n in range(0,self.data[3].get_length()):
            if(LegName==self.data[4].get_value(n)):
                if (self.data[12].get_value(n)=="Support"):
                    contrPro=contrPro+float(self.data[5].get_value(n
                        ↪ ).replace('$',','').replace(',','.'))
                else:
                    contrCont=contrCont+float(self.data[5].get_value
                        ↪ (n).replace('$',','').replace(',','.'))
```


Python Source Code

```
        return[contrPro ,contrCont]

def return_complete_dataset(self):
    return self.data
```

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Erklärung gemäß §7 (4) der Promotionsordnung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass ich die Dissertation selbständig auf der Grundlage von Hilfsmitteln und Hilfen verfasst habe, die sämtlich in der Dissertation angegeben sind. Ich versichere, dass die Dissertation nicht schon einmal in einem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder als ungenügend beurteilt worden ist. Ich erkläre mich bereit, dem Promotionsausschuss auf Anfrage die Arbeiten aus früheren Promotionsverfahren vorzulegen.

Berlin, den 16.01.2019

Mirjam Koch