Learning Process in Public Policy: The Case of Iranian Nuclear Diplomacy

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Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the linkage between domestic public policy and international bargaining power in the realm of science and technology policy. To do so, it constructs a model hybrid of two independent theoretical frameworks: Advocacy Coalition Framework by Paul Sabatier and Double Edged Diplomacy by Peter Evans. The main question to answer is how policy learning at the national level can occur as a result of the factor of enlightenment according to the Advocacy Coalition Framework and the second question is how this learning stretches to the foreign policy sub-system and invigorates the capacity of negotiating team for providing more innovative package of technical instruments or the so-called "win-set", according to the Double Edged Diplomacy. This hybrid model is applied to the case of nuclear policy/ diplomacy of Iran. Thus, the objective of the paper is twofold: first, it takes on an analysis of the domestic nuclear policy change or readjustment in Iran that has been produced by policy learning. The second objective is to explain how this domestic learning factor overflowed to the foreign policy sub-systems and has provided the country with a new approach to the nuclear negotiations with foreign partners.

Keywords: Iran, Nuclear Science and Technology Policy and Diplomacy

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Introduction

The long-awaited, landmark Geneva interim accord concluded in November 2013 between Iran and the P5+1 powers was, to some extent, the culmination of years of conventional diplomacy, coupled with the systematic pressure. However, it must now be abundantly clear that the agreement would not have materialized without Iranian government's bold decision to adjust the central theme of its foreign policy, seeking to reconcile its strategic national interest with that of the international community. What are the causes of this policy changes? Is it a permanent paradigm shift in the international diplomacy of this country as a result of genuine policy learning or a temporary alteration due to the international political and economic pressures? This is the main question, which has been raised over and over again and given different answers thereto by many Iran experts and observers according to their perceptions of Iranian decision makers' political and ideological background.

Steering clear of discussing the role of political ideology and avoiding value judgment, this paper, however, is devoted to answering the above mentioned question by shedding light on the importance of learning process and technical information, which has accumulated domestically over the years and then overflowed to the foreign policy sub-system enhancing the national capacity for nuclear negotiation with the P5+1. In order to substantiate this argument, the paper first construct a model in which the process of policy learning and innovation integrates the national and international level policy making and then it shows how this model is applicable to the case of

Iranian nuclear policy-diplomacy. Accordingly, the Interim Accord is an internationally outward manifestation of a domestic long term cumulative learning in the field of the nuclear S&T technology policy in Iran, which has broken the stalemate between the two adversarial advocacy coalitions in this subsystem.

The paper continues with introducing its theoretical framework, which is built by integrating two different theoretical constructs: one, Double Edged Diplomacy (hereafter DED) originally presented by Peter Evans (1993) and second, Advocacy Coalition Framework (hereafter, ACF), established and revised by Paul Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). Therefore, the paper builds a two dimensional model of science and technology oriented public-foreign policy, which focuses on change and innovation. Based on this hybrid model, the paper organizes historical data concerning the subsystem of nuclear technology policy in the first section. In this section, the main concern is how the AFC framework is applicable to the Iranian nuclear policy and how the Iranian nuclear diplomacy can be explained by the DED framework is the main question raised in the second section of the paper. To find answer for the second question, the acceptability set of Iranian negotiating party culminated in the Interim Accord is analyzed and explained.

I. Theoretical Framework

There are different theoretical frameworks within the public policy disciplines, which understand and explain policy learning process: (Borass Sussana, 2011), (Hall Peter, 1993) and Howlett and Ramesh (Howlette Michael, 2002). Among them, Paul Sabatier's ACF stands distinguished for its attention to social dynamism, taking public policy as the reflector of the belief systems of the advocacy coalition within a policy subsystem. It has been developed to explain policy change and continuity by internal dynamism and external factors. A major assumption of the ACF is that actors in a policy domain or subsystem can be aggregated into a few advocacy coalitions. These coalitions

typically consist of interest group leaders, agency officials, legislators, applied researchers, journalists, and politicians. Parties within a coalition share a set of normative and causal beliefs and show a non-trivial degree of coordinated behavior to realize their objectives and policy proposals (Sabatier, 1998). According to Sabatier, belief systems of these coalitions are organized in a hierarchical, tripartite structure. The deep core of a belief system includes basic ontological and normative beliefs. The policy core represents basic normative commitments and causal perceptions across an entire policy domain. These beliefs concern the basic perceptions of the seriousness of a policy problem, its main causes, and perceptions about the appropriateness of institutional arrangements to deal with this problem. Finally, the secondary aspects of a belief system are less than subsystem-wide beliefs concerning problems, causes, and remedies.

ACF presents several specific hypotheses on conditions conducive to cross-coalition policy oriented learning. It is argued that analytically tractable issues, an intermediate level of informed conflict, and the presence of professional forums prestigious enough for members of opposing coalitions to participate in are contributing to learning (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993).[1] According to Sabatier, information about the nature and complexity of the problem is essential to informed policy decision-making. Administrative agencies, legislators, and analysts need to know and understand as much about the problem, its causes, and the likely impacts of various interventions as they deliberate, craft, and implement public policies. This suggests a role for technical specialists in policy activities. Second, Advocacy Coalition Framework argues that understanding policy change and policy learning requires time spans of a decade or more. This premise is based on Weiss' research into the importance of the "enlightenment function" of policy research showing how learning over time can alter the perceptions of policymakers (Weiss, 1999). And finally, an important feature of the ACF is "policy brokers", who do not lean towards any competing advocacy coalitions, but seek

compromise between them. They were conceived of elected officials, senior civil servants, and regulatory bodies. As much as the ACF is an ideal basis for analyzing the domestic side of new development in the Iranian nuclear policy, it cannot stretch itself to cover the international side since this framework is generally applied within a disciplinary context that views policy formation as an essentially domestic level process occurring within states. According to AFC, policy shifts are the result of changes external to the policy system, including dynamic system events at the international level (Sabatier& Jenkins Smith 1993, pp. 22_23).

That is why we have to search for a complementary basis to frame the international dimension of our study. Suffices it to note that the literature of coupling the two domestic and international levels has gone through three periods: In 1969, the idea of "convergence" presented by James Rosenau (Rosenau 1969) focused on the overlap between domestic and foreign affairs as a result of ICT revolution and globalization. He addressed the blurring distinction between some domestic and international arena and called this phenomenon "Convergence". In the 1970s and in 1980s, "second image" and "second image reversed" literatures explored respectively, the domestic causes of foreign policy and international sources of domestic policy (Gourevitch, 1978), (Katzenstein, 1977). In 1990s, the two level-game approach proposes an interactive model by viewing national negotiators as constrained simultaneously by domestic/foreign divide. (Evans, 1993).

It is clear that due to the sensitiveness of the case in point, i.e., "nuclear technology" in Iran, and due to the fact that it symbolizes the defense of sovereignty, security and national pride for the Iranian people against international intrusion, this paper is hardly able to follow the lead of Rosenau's "convergence" theory. Contrary to "convergence" phenomenon, we are, in fact, dealing with "divergence" in the relationship between the public policy of Iran and the outside world, instead.

The second set of theories looks very promising. Nevertheless, they do not deal with the negotiation ability and the domestic factors influencing the ability of the statesmen in the negotiation. That is why we have chosen Peter Evans (Evans, 1993) to benefit from his clear-cut, yet interrelating divide between the national and international affairs. Moreover, he discusses different situations in which international negotiations can lead to different results. Keeping in mind that in the theoretical construct of the two level games approach of Evans, Jacobson and Putnam (Evens Peter, 1993), there are three essential building blocks: specifications of domestic politics or the nature of win-set, the international negotiating environment, and the statesmen's preferences, (Evens Peter, 1993:23):. According to this approach, the executives are "Janus faced" dealing with both constituency driven domestic and the international system logics and if these two logics do not correspond, an area of autonomy is created for the executives' discretion to deal with strategic opportunities and dilemmas. (Evens Peter, 1993:5)

The authors assume that diplomatic strategies and tactics are constrained both by what other states will accept and by what domestic constituencies will ratify. Thus, statesmen try to build international agreement, seeking simultaneously to manipulate domestic and international politics. (Evens, 1993 : 5). Defining diplomacy as a process of strategic interaction, the authors contend that actors simultaneously use these actions to take account of and, if possible, influence the expected reactions of the other actors, both at home and abroad. Suffice it to emphasize that there are substantial differences between DED and ACF, including, but not limited to, the following: 1.The DED assumes that the formation of coalition and interest groups are based on an assessment of the relative costs and benefits of negotiated alternatives to the status quo (Evens Peter, 1993):24, while our model inspired by AFC presupposes that people engage in politics to translate their beliefs into action. 2. The DED contends that the bases of these cost and benefit assessments forming

the interest groups remains constant throughout the analysis (Evens Peter, 1993:24), while our model based on ACF is about how policy can change. It presumes that the stakeholders' beliefs have three layers with different capacity to change. 3. The ACF underscores the importance of learning and enlightenment in the policy change. In fact, learning factor is the first of 5 premises of the initial version of the advocacy CF. Moreover, technical information concerning the magnitude and facets of the problem, its causes, the probable impacts of various solutions are assumed to play an important role in many administrative agency (Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith 1990). 4. According to the DED model, the set of agreements preferred by statesmen to the status quo may be termed the statesmen "acceptability- set" (Evans, 1993: 30). The focus of the analysis is on the strategic incentives created by certain configurations of the acceptability set relative to the domestic win–set. The possible configurations can be divided into three categories: statesmen as agents, as doves and as hawks. In the case of statesman as dove, the acceptability–set lies at least partially outside the domestic win-set and closer to the opposing win-set. In the case of the statesmen as hawk, the acceptability –set lies at least partially outside the domestic win-set but further from the opposing win-set than the set of the rectifiable agreement.

Our presumption, inspired by ACF, is that statesmen acceptability set reflects the core beliefs of the advocacy coalition of the chief of the government or the advocacy coalition which runs the executive branch. Depending on the settings of the political system, the domain that the Chief of Government (COG) can influence is different from the domain controlled by the other major players of the State like Parliament, Court, etc, which is required for rectification of the international deals and if the COG and the other players belong to two competing coalitions, the difference of their acceptability sets makes the size of national win-set small and its rectification unpredictable. When there is a devil shift between two rival coalitions, the size of acceptability-set of statesmen depends on

the political, informational and economical resources of the advocacy coalition that runs the executive branch and its political and policy rivals. If they are countervailing powers, the agreements between the negotiating teams and its foreign counterpart is at risk of domestic refusal. Contrarily, the size of the win set is the largest if the COG is not a policy advocate but policy broker who helps to mediate between two core policies. Coupling ACF with DED, we build a theoretical model to determine how a change of public policy can modify the behavior of the diplomat and alter their tactics and strategies from zero-sum game to positive sum game and vice versa and ultimately augment the plausibility of an accord between two negotiating parties.

II. Nuclear Technology of Iran and the West

The commencement of Iran's nuclear activities carried the blessing of the Western countries. At that time, Iran as a member of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was a partner of the United States and had a close relationship with Western countries. In 1957, in the framework of President Dwight D Eisenhower's program of Atoms for Peace, which aimed to spread the peaceful use of nuclear technology in the world, the US government was instrumental in forming the International Atomic Energy Agency under the auspice of the UN. Iran signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 on the day it was opened for signature (Nikou Samira, N/A). The cooperation started with the United States decision to supply Iran with a research reactor for medical uses based on atoms for peace program.

In that same year, the Institute of Nuclear Sciences, affiliated with the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), was relocated from Baghdad to Tehran University. The Institute became a training center for Iranian students as well as those from Pakistan and Turkey (Entessar, 2009). The government of Iran had signed a contract with the American Machines and Foundry Company (AMF), for the construction of a research nuclear reactor at the University of Tehran

(6 megawatts) in 1960. Accordingly, the first center for nuclear energy in Iran, the Tehran Nuclear research Center, was established at the University of Tehran in the same year. Later in 1972, based on the recommendation of the American government, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) was established. At the same year, the university of Tehran and University of Shiraz became active in teaching nuclear technology and some Iranian students were sent abroad by the government to study nuclear energy. In 1975, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology signed a contract with the AEOI for providing training for the first cadre of Iranian nuclear engineers.

Based on the recommendation of the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), on Nov. 1974, Iran signed an agreement with Kraftwerk Union AG (KWU), a subsidiary of Siemens, to construct two light water reactors with the capacity of 1300 Megawatts. Construction began the next year, and completion was scheduled for 1981 (Sich, 2012). More than two thousand German and Iranian experts began working on this project together, which at the time was one of the largest nuclear energy production plants in the world.

French companies have also played an important role in the introduction of nuclear technology to Iran. France formally began its nuclear activities in Iran in 1977, and in October of that year, Iran and FramAtome, a French company, concluded an agreement for the construction of two nuclear power plants with a 900 megawatt capacity near Ahvaz. But before that in 1974, the Iranian government lent $1 billion to the French Atomic Energy Commission to build the Eurodif plant. The loan would have entitled Iran to buy 10 percent of enriched uranium produced by Eurodif. In 1977, Iran paid an additional $180 million for future enrichment services by Eurodif and for the construction of the Eurodif factory, and the right to buy 10% of the production of the site. (Olivier, 2006) Another example of the cooperation between Iran and France on nuclear issue was the Nuclear Technology Center at Esfahan (Isfahan) founded in the mid-

1970s with French assistance in order to provide training for the personnel that would be working at the Bushehr reactors.

The establishment of the revolutionary Islamic government in 1979 ended U.S. participation in Iran's nuclear energy program. For its own part, the new government cut back or cancelled much of the Shah's ambitious nuclear program including plans for power reactors. However, Iran political leadership's policy core system was changed during the years of the war with Iraq, (1980-1988). The eight-year confrontation was the Middle East's bloodiest modern conflict, Iraq had used chemical weapon against Iran and the West did not condemn Iraq nor provided Iran with necessary self-defense armament (Chubin, 2006).

In the Post- war era, Iran planned to be as self –reliant as possible in technology, and the nuclear energy program was a part of it. However, by the time Iran refocused on the nuclear program, the Western countries had changed their strategy about nuclear technology transfer to Iran for obvious political reasons. Following certain unsuccessful efforts by Iran to acquire nuclear technology, parts, instruments, and materials from the West, Russia, China, and Pakistan emerged as the most important partners of Iran in providing know-how, spare parts as well as human capital and training in the field of nuclear technology. The deals struck by Iran in the 1990s along with the mobilized national resources in the 20-Year Vision Document set Iran's nuclear energy program in motion.

III. Policy Learning

Analyzing the official discourse developed around the nuclear issue in Iran, two aspects of the relevant policy are noteworthy: The first aspect deals with the legal right of Iran as a signatory to the NPT to use nuclear energy as a means for multiplying the source of its energy. According to the official commitments reflected in formal documents, the Islamic Republic of Iran is after nothing beyond its legitimate right as stipulated in the NPT wishing to enjoy its

inalienable right in return for meeting its obligations. Iranian officials have always maintained that, due to the limited resources of fossil fuels, the right of future generations and detrimental impact of the use of fossil fuels on environment as well as growing population and economy and the increasing need in energy resources, and preferable use of oil in processing industries, Iran cannot remain dependent merely on the fossil fuels and has to diversify its energy resources. Iran's plan, as announce by the Government, is to produce 20000 megawatts electricity by 2025, based on the growth rate of its economy. Based on its long term plan, Iran is to provide the required fuel for its nuclear plants from internal and external resources.

,Iran's legal right in this field is accepted in principle by the whole world. The West has made clear that it respects the right of Iran to benefit from nuclear energy . At the same time, different statements issued by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the margin of different meetings of the IAEA's Board of Governors, as well as the statement issued by the NAM Heads of States and Ministerial Meetings along with the statement issued at the OIC meeting in Baku in June 2006 are in support of the Iranian peaceful nuclear activities (Erdbrink , 2012).

While the first aspect of nuclear policy covers the legality of the issue, the second aspect deals with its technicality. The latter (technical issues) is conveying the policy instruments and means to attain the former (legal issues) as the objectives or policy goals. In our case, the policy covering the process of raw material such as enriching uranium or producing machineries and equipment can be considered as policy instruments or policy means for reaching the policy goal of having indigenous nuclear technology. Suffice it to note that there is no consensus in Iran on the nature and combination of these technical policy instruments. In fact, there is a conspicuous disagreement at the domestic level about which sets of policy means and its calibration should be employed to reach the developmental goal of indigenous nuclear energy. The detail of these questions is as

follows: 1. Is it in Iran's interest to implement the additional protocol.(Cohen, 2014, May 14)? 2. What size of nuclear program is plausibly consistent with the Iranian peaceful use? How many centrifuges? How many sites? How many kilograms of enriched uranium should the Iranians keep in their stockpiles? 3. How far should Iran go to be transparent in terms of nuclear and non-nuclear activities (missile development and its purpose).

Dealing with this issue, which is replete with controversy, has given rise to two major advocacy coalitions in Iran with two different policy cores, which each of them has a distinct view about the policy instruments and its settings and calibration. Since each advocacy coalition has had the chance to translate its policy beliefs to technology policies when it has won the presidential election and ran the executive branch, the contemporary Iran has witness different episodes in which different policy and planning regarding policy instruments has been implemented. In the next section, below, we review the history of Iran after the Revolution in 4 episodes. Each episode has the different degrees of cohesion and consensus among political elites about policy instruments:

Period of Consensus (1987-1997): The period of maximum consensus on Iran's nuclear program spanned 10 years. The revival of the shah's nuclear program was initially presented as necessary to the diversification of the country's energy sources. Nuclear technology was viewed as cutting edge development and indispensable for any economic power. Throughout the program's early stages, there appeared to be a general consensus among the political elite about the need and the right to proceed.

Early Controversy (1997-2005): In this period, President Rafsanjani finished his term and President Khatami was sworn in as the fifth President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The reformist government ameliorated the image of Iran in the international arena, in part with their tactics and strategies employed in nuclear diplomacy regarding the enrichment of uranium. Throughout this period, the

nuclear program was largely a concern of Iran's political elites. The National Security Council managed all aspects of the nuclear policy and its decisions were therefore said to be reflective of a national consensus. In this period, the reformist government of President Mohammad Khatami secured an agreement in the National Security Council to address international concerns and attain a compromise. Iran agreed to voluntarily apply the NPT's Additional Protocol which permitted stricter international inspections and agreed to voluntarily suspend enrichment for a limited though unspecified time. But, the opposite advocacy coalition (conservatives) who gained control of Iran's parliament in 2004 began criticizing their political rivals (reformists) as being too soft on Europe and the United States and compromising Iran's interests. In 2005, newly elected President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, resumed enriching uranium and officially ended the previous administration diplomatic overtures to the Europeans.

Tough Stance (2005-2013): Iran's nuclear program became increasingly political during this phase. As of 2005, Iran's both the executive branch and Parliament were dominated by conservative coalition. Among hardliners, Ex-President Ahmadinejad's rallies and speeches frequently included orchestrated chants in favor of Iran's nuclear rights. At one point, he announced that Iran's nuclear program was "like a train without brakes", not vulnerable to outside pressure. However, two factors spurred intense backlash and reactions from the other side of the political spectrum. First, the United Nations Security Council imposed a series of resolutions between 2006 and 2010 that included punitive sanctions. The United States and the European Union also imposed even tougher unilateral sanctions. By 2010, the divide over Iran's nuclear program was principally about domestic political schisms rather than the desired strategies of key stakeholders.

Informed Consensus (2013-2014): The Iranian 11th Presidential election was held in May 2013. The results were

unexpected. Iran's former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and chief nuclear negotiator with the EU in 2003, Hasan Rouhani, was elected with a wide margin. One of the major items on his platform and, therefore, on his mandate was clear: "tackling the nuclear issue".

During his first 100 days of his Presidency, the Rouhani Administration changed the country's approach to the nuclear negotiations in both substance and tone, and the Foreign Ministry was chosen to implement the nuclear diplomacy by negotiating with the P5+ 1. The evidence shows that nuclear policy and diplomacy of President Rouhani is the one of a middleman mediating between the rival advocacy coalitions of reformers and conservatives. As a consequence, after more than 15 years, a new consensus has emerged in the political arena. This consensus is different from the one in phase one, in terms of the experience and analytical capacity used to narrow the gap between the positions of two coalitions. That is why we can call it the informed consensus building efforts. That means efforts towards a consensus based on policy learning and knowledge earned by trial and error and education, which culminated in the relative alignment of the policy beliefs of the two advocacy coalitions in the nuclear policy subsystem.

IV. Analysis

As explained earlier, the first concern of the paper was whether the AFC framework is applicable to the Iranian nuclear subsystem. This question should be responded positively due to what we have learned through the first section. In fact, the review of the history of the nuclear policy developments in Iran substantiates the fundamental pillars of the AFC's argument: The long lasting controversies over the major issues of nuclear diplomacy show a wide and long lasting chasm between the two camps of conservatives and reformers in the nuclear energy sub-system. That proves the first hypothesis of AFC about the stability of the lineup of allies and opponents over a long

period of time, a decade or so. While there has been a heated debate on the issue of nuclear diplomacy between the two coalitions, there is relative coherence in each camp, pertaining to the policy core. This proves the second hypothesis which addresses substantial consensus that actors within an advocacy coalition, show on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects.

The AFC maintains that the actors resist less and give up on secondary aspects of a belief system before acknowledging weakness in the policy core. The dynamics of rivalry of the two advocacy coalitions in the nuclear policy subsystem demonstrates the issue of amenability and openness to influence of secondary policy issues compared to the policy core. The alternation of policy cores in every 8 years (spanning two presidencies) shows the accuracy of the other hypothesis of AFC, since according to this framework, the core (basic attributes) of a governmental program is unlikely to be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that institutes the program remains in power (Sabatier and Jenkins Smith, 1998: 213-222). In fact, the contemporary history of Iran has proved this revised hypothesis right. Each political coalition has continued to defend its policy as long as it was in power and there is no meaningful policy change in the midst of their tenures. The significant perturbations external to the subsystem, i.e., economic sanctions and political pressures, cannot cause policy change unless skillful exploitation of those opportunities by the rivals or policy brokers within the subsystem. This proves once again the AFC hypothesis that the core (basic attributes) of a governmental action program is unlikely to be changed by the external pressure without some domestic intervention. The break of the deadlock situation between the two opposing camps of reformers and conservatives in the process of development of nuclear policy in Iran proves the AFC hypothesis right, thus indicating that policy-oriented learning across belief system is most likely to occur when there is intermediate level of informed conflict between the two at the secondary aspects of the two belief systems.

Also the end of the stalemate between the two camps has been made possible during Iran's eleventh presidency consisting of centralist technocrats and bureaucrats, as it functions as policy broker and not policy advocate. That could vindicate another pillar of the AFC framework, which maintains that Policy Oriented towards learning across belief systems is most likely when there exists a forum which is: a) prestigious enough to force professionals from different coalitions to participate; and b) dominated by professional norms. AFC maintains that the accumulation of technical information does change the views of the opposing coalition and it can have important impacts on policy by altering the views of policy brokers or other important government officials.

These evidences demonstrate that the AFC framework not only is applicable comfortably to the dynamics of nuclear policy subsystem in Iran, but also it can explain why and how the nuclear policy innovation has occurred. In fact, by probing historical dynamism of nuclear technology policy subsystem, the paper addresses a two thronged deeply rooted learning process which ultimately alter subsystem policy settings. This learning process, stemmed from increasing major analytical capacity of technocrats and bureaucrats, has been brought forth by strategic interaction among people within the policy research and policy making fields. It later overflowed its original bedrock to stretch to the Iranian political elite milieu and enhance their reflective capacity at the level of society which had already shaken by formal policy analyses and trial and error learning amid international pressure and overall mismanagement of the economy.

Thus, we can conclude from the three first part of the paper that the Interim Accord is an internationally outward manifestation of a domestic long term cumulative learning in the field of the nuclear S&T technology policy in Iran and not just a swing of the policy pendulum –fueled by elite disaccord over means and ends of Iran's diplomacy following the 11th Presidential election in Iran in 2013.

The Reflection of the Consensus at the International Level: Now, we proceed to the second part, which is to explain how the learning factor have positively affected Iranian bargaining power and ultimately augmented the plausibility of an accord between Iran and the West by enlarging what Evans and Putnam has called "domestic win–set" (Evans and Putnam, 1993) and decreasing the probability that these two sides may fail to honor their accord. To be specific in the DED jargon, we should explain how the rapprochement between the two coalitions affected the configuration of the statesmen's acceptability –sets and the national win-set.

The Period (1997-2004): In this period, Iran succeeded in making important progress in its indigenous nuclear effort. By 2002, when the scope of its nuclear program became clear, Iran had already made progress towards mastering the technology needed to enrich uranium, one of the sensitive dual technologies. Facing threat from the UN Security Council, Iranian officials and experts argued that under Iran's safeguards agreement with the IAEA, Iran was only obligated to inform the Agency of its nuclear activities six months prior to the introduction of nuclear material into the facility concerned. This is a reference to Article 42 of Iran's safeguards agreement as well as to a secondary document known as a "subsidiary arrangement." The language in the "Subsidiary Arrangement" requires notice to the IAEA of new facilities "no later than 180 days before the introduction of nuclear material into the facility, and the provision of information on a new LOF (Location Outside of Facilities where nuclear material is used)…" Thus, scholars are convinced (Albert, 2006) that, at the time, Iran had not been technically obligated to notify the IAEA on the construction of the Natanz facilities for uranium enrichment. Iran's later explanations, along with the results of the IAEA's inspections, were published in a series of reports beginning in June 2003. At the same time , Iran continued steadily to maintain a course of domestic capability building.

In October 2003, the foreign Ministers of France, Germany, and

the UK visited Tehran to discuss their concerns about Iranian nuclear issues. In the Tehran Declaration the parties issued at that date, Iran agreed to co-operate with the IAEA, to sign and implement an Additional Protocol as a voluntary, confidence-building measure, and to suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities during the course of the negotiations. The EU-3 in return explicitly agreed to recognize Iran's nuclear rights and to discuss ways Iran could provide "satisfactory assurances" regarding its nuclear power program, after which Iran would gain easier access to modern technology. Iran signed an Additional Protocol on 18 December 2003, and agreed to act as if the protocol were in force,without being obligated to do so. Moreover, the EU3 agreed not to work towards referring Iran's file to the Security Council, By entering into the agreement, Iran aimed to eliminate any misperceptions concerning its nuclear program.

The negotiations in the almost two ensuing years led to nowhere and the package Iran received was empty of any substance on assisting Iran. Moreover, the package reiterated on the cessation of enrichment in the country, Facing European intransigence, and shortly after the election of President Ahmadinejad, Iran saw no alternative but to resume its nuclear activities, including enrichment, by breaking the IAEA's seals on the equipment in the UCF nuclear facilities in Isfahan in August 2005. Thus, a new era of Iranian R&D in nuclear technology began. Meanwhile, there are specific questions regarding the package of the EU3 submitted to Iran as follows: 1.What size nuclear program is plausibly consistent with civilian use only; 2.How to ensure that the barrier between such a program and militarization is rock-solid; 3.How to achieve complete transparency and relentless verification beyond anything seen in other non-nuclear-armed states that enrich uranium; and 4. What to do about a question scarcely addressed in the interim accord: Iran's missile development and its purpose. (Cohen, 2014, May 14)

In September 2005, the board of governors of IAEA, based on the Agency's 2003 report, declared that Iran had not compiled with its

safeguards agreement and voted to refer Iran to the UN Security Council. This vote set the stage for a number of Security Council resolutions against Iran, sponsored by the UK, Germany and France and with the backing of the US. Iran, in response, suspended all the voluntary cooperation, including the implementation of the additional protocol, beyond what the country was obligated to do. On April 8 2006, President Ahmadinejad officially announced Iran's new technological capabilities in enriching uranium, as well as the establishment of a complete chain of uranium enrichment centrifuge in Natanz. On 9 February 2010, Iran announced that it would enrich uranium up to 20% to create fuel for a research reactor that produces medical radioisotopes, further enriching its existing stocks of 3.5% enriched uranium. Of course, making this announcement during five round of negotiations with the EU3+3 did not help the already highly charged atmosphere and escalated the tensions and disputes.

In this episode the executive branch was run by the conservative advocacy coalition. As the policy belief of this coalition is vested in an inflexible position regarding the policy paradigm as well as policy instruments and settings, the acceptability of the statesmen is much less than the national win-set. The country top negotiators in this period were Ali Larijani and Saeed Jalili, who were considered to be both hardliners.

At long last, in November 2013, the diplomacy began to function, and against a backdrop of rising tensions and bellicose rhetoric, moderation and prudence began to prevail. Subsequently, a brand new chapter in Iran's relation with the P5+1 opened up, characterized by some as harbinger of a more pragmatic approach.

The current episode followed the election of President Rouhani in June 2013. Since the Rouhani administration's position regarding the nuclear policy and diplomacy looks more like one of the policy broker than policy advocate, mediating between the two coalitions and helping them realign through evidence- based policy making, it is expected that the win set and the acceptability set of the statesmen

correspond to one another perfectly.

In the case of the administration invested in maximum flexibility, the acceptability–set lies at least partially outside the domestic win-set and closer to the opposing countries' win-set. In the case when the administration is run by zero-tolerance flexibility, the acceptability-set lies at least partially outside the domestic win-set, but further from the opposing countries' win-set. In the case when the administration is run by policy broker based on realignment of the two competing coalitions, there is no conflict or even discrepancy between the negotiating team and the societal acceptability.

The second question raised in the theoretical part of this paper was as to whether the DED framework is an appropriate theoretical framework to analyze and understand the case of nuclear negotiations between Iran with the P5 +1. We have found out that this is the case by considering the points below:

First of all, since the issue of national right to have indigenous nuclear technology is a matter with extreme sensitiveness in the discourse of real politics of Iran, no Iranian foreign policy makers and strategist can afford to underestimate the importance of public and elite opinion on this issue. That is why the nuclear diplomacy in Iran appears *par excellence,* a case of the two level game approach argument beginning by assuming that statesmen normally and typically try to do two things at once: seeking simultaneously to gain the control of the domestic and international politics.

Following the first feature of the Iranian nuclear diplomacy, diplomatic strategies and tactics are constrained both by what other states will accept and by what domestic constituencies will ratify. Evans and Putnam invite us to think about diplomat having *janus face,* and "diplomacy" as a process of strategic interaction in which actors simultaneously try to take account of and, if possible, influence the reactions of other actors, both at home and abroad.

However, as we have already mentioned in the theoretical part of this paper, the literature of DED is silent about the importance of

policy learning and accumulation of technical information in the dimension of foreign policy decision making. Inspired by the AFC framework, this paper has added the role of trans-subsystem learning and accumulation of technical information absorbed by the members of both competing coalitions, which led to a situation in which a coalition of bureaucrats and technocrats gained the political power and brokered between the two long-time adversaries.

Before this episode in the Iranian contemporary history, i.e. the Khatami and Ahmadinejad's presidencies, the strategy of the Iranian team in the course of the negotiations with the EU3 and P5+1 dramatically changed every 8 years according to the affiliation of the COG to one of these advocacy coalitions. In each of the two periods covered, there was a different configuration of statesmen acceptability–set and national win-set, which consequently yielded to different strategy and bargaining power. When the COG adhered to the belief system of maximum flexibility coalition, the acceptability–set used to be categorically larger than the domestic win-set and the agreement resulted in the negotiations process being at risk of rejection by the domestic political power bloc including the Parliament. As the contemporary history of Iran has witnessed the agreements between Khatami's administration and the EU3 had to face a sever backlash from its domestic political opponents. The situation changed during the Ahmadinejad's presidency when the COG leaned towards the zero-tolerance flexibility. During this term, the acceptability–set of the negotiating team was smaller than the domestic win-set. That is why many observers have refer to this negotiation strategy, as of the one squandering the opportunities for a real and sustainable dialogue with the West based on Iran right to have an indigenous nuclear technology.[2]

Conclusion

This paper aimed to explain the recent developments of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the 5+1 from an Iranian perspective.

The use of peaceful nuclear technology is based on national right acquired by members parties to the NPT. This underlying foundation is shared by all Iranian political factions and groups of political elites. However, when it comes to working policy as to how the Iranian State enjoys its right to development nuclear energy and which specific policy tools to employ, there have been quite a few disagreements among political groupings.

Drawing on the AFC framework, the paper distinguishes two major advocacy coalitions distinguishable by their degree of openness to the policy change and alteration. The first one with a belief system, which is not susceptible to any readjustment in the stratification of its belief system, is hardly amenable to major or minor policy change and compromise. That is why the paper called it "zero tolerance for flexibility". The other coalition, which is called "maximum flexibility", is conscious and precise about the various degrees of seriousness and importance of the different parts of its belief system and responsive to change in not only policy settings and secondary policy beliefs in the subsystem but also in the policy core, while being stern in its deep core belief (The national right to employ nuclear energy) in order to gain other advantages in the negotiation process. Hence, there are major differences in the policy cores, instruments and settings and calibration, while both acknowledge the national right to indigenous peaceful nuclear technology development. Through a historical study, we learn that each coalition had equal historical opportunity to implement its core policy beliefs for two terms of 4 years each as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During each term, the core (basic attributes) of their governmental program was not revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that institutes the program remained in power. And when the other advocacy coalition gained power, the nuclear policy core and the policy instrument and calibration were to change according to its policy core and instruments of the advocacy coalition in power. That is why the policy change dynamics within the subsystem resembled two

pendulum swings from one extreme to the other without any lasting impact on the policy core and policy instruments of the opposing coalitions.

This situation was changed by the time the eleventh presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran was sworn into his office. In fact, the mandate of Rouhani's cabinet, consisting of high-ranking technocrats and bureaucrats with vast technical knowledge and analytical capacity, changed the subsystem dynamics immediately by entrusting the technical experts, private managers and college professors the posts with enormous power of national and international decision making. The appointed persons have tried their best to mediate between the two sets of apparently antagonistically opposing stances. Once the important gridlock was broken, the policy learning could overflow from the domestic policy making process to the one impacting the international bargaining power, leading to many diplomatic innovations which have ultimately increased the chance of a sustainable agreement on the Iranian nuclear program and the recognition at the international level of Iran' right to have an indigenous nuclear technology. Before this development and under Khatami and Ahmadinejad, the paper demonstrated that the strategy of Iranian team in the course of the negotiations with the 5+1 dramatically changed every 8 years according to the affiliation of the COG to one of these advocacy coalitions. In each of the two periods covered, there was a specific configuration of statesmen acceptability–set and national win-set and, consequently, different strategies and bargaining methods. When the COG adhered to the belief system of maximum flexibility coalition, the acceptability–set was larger than the domestic win-set and the would-be agreement resulting from the negotiations process was at risk of not being ratified by the Parliament. As the contemporary history of Iran has shown, the agreements between President Khatami's administration and the EU3 was to face a sever backlash from the conservatives. Even some observers interpreted the election of President Ahmadinejad in

August 2005 as one of the negative repercussions to that Accord. The situation changed during President Ahmadinejad's presidency when the COG leaned towards zero-tolerance flexibility. During his term in office, the acceptability–set of the negotiating team was smaller than the domestic win-set. That is why many observers have attributed the squandering of opportunities for a real agreement to the strategy pursued in that period.

The paper, then, analyzed the present administration's brokering stance towards the negotiations by introducing an evidence-based policy making in the domain of nuclear technology policy. Consequently, the alignment of the two coalitions within the sub-system was made possible. Referring to Evans famous principle asserting that "the statesmen acceptability set reflects the interests of the median domestic group and is encompassed by the domestic win-set if the statesmen were policy brokers", the paper showed that, since the advent of the current administration, there has been less conflict or discrepancy between the approach adopted by the negotiating team and the societal acceptability. This has been made possible by the fact that the two opposing coalitions, locked for long in disagreement, have started to align their policy positions regarding the policy instruments based on a process of learning and lesson drawings from the past experiences. Consequently, the aggregate of the acceptability sets of both advocacy coalitions widened the national win-set and, thus, the Interim Accord could come to fruition.

The paper shed light on the potentials that the hybrid model has brought forth for reconstructing a complicated case such as the Iranian diplomacy in the process of nuclear talks from the angle of domestic public policy learning and how it may explain its continuity and change in the course of this process. Yet, there are a lot of shortcomings to be addressed and many improvements to be made. Among others, we can enumerate the points below: The relation between the domestic and the international levels seems to be a mechanical juxtaposition of the two dimensions of the decision

making. There is a need for further investigation regarding the vital relations between these two levels. There are a lot of questions yet to be answered: questions as to how relationship between the two processes of learning and innovation in the domestic and international policy and diplomacy mutually reinforce each other. The paper considered one of its directions which was the overflow of learning process from the domestic level to the international level. Yet, it is not a one way relationship. There should be further investigation regarding the two-way interactive learning relationship. And finally, it is clear that the national win-set, the policy package acceptable and rectifiable by internal political powers, does not have a fixed content. It has a dynamic and sometimes fluid content based on different factors which should be determined and analyzed in different research.

Without a doubt, the analysis of the future developments in the course of the negotiation process towards a comprehensive accord between Iran and the 5+1 needs a broader perspective, which is out of the scope of this paper. However, the influence of domestic politics and policy learning, depicted in this paper, will still have a significant impact on the final outcome of the negotiations, which is to be completed by 24 November 2014.[3]

Notes

1. Across-coalition learning is generally easier in the natural than in the social/behavioral sciences; because the theories and accepted methods are better established and the objects of study are not themselves actors in the policy debate.
2. During the eleven presidential election debates, the issue was brought up several times by some of the candidates. See the Press TV video at www.youtube. com/ watch?v=U7Czuyy4TTc, (retrieved 8-9-2014)
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