

# Iran's Regional Ambitions

## The Rising Power of Azerbaijan's Neighbour

*Lucie Švejdová*

Bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran are complex and filled with escalating tensions, demographic and territorial challenges, as well as mutually beneficial cooperation. With economic sanctions lifted (at the time of this writing) as a result of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran has embarked on a path towards economic recovery, a window of opportunity for reaching the status of regional power is opening. Whether the future scenario of post-sanctions Iran generates increased economic cooperation and regional stability, or whether Iran will emerge as a regional hegemon possessing nuclear weapons, is impossible to predict but the direction of Iran's post-sanction foreign policy is of a major concern to Azerbaijan, Iran's South Caucasian neighbour.

*Keywords: Azerbaijan-Iran bilateral relations, Azerbaijan's foreign policy the Iran nuclear deal, conflict in Syria*

### Introduction

There is little doubt that due to its exceptional geostrategic position and natural resources Iran has the attributes of a regional power with both hegemonic potential and ambitions. Iran's geostrategic position provides the Islamic Republic with the potential to project its influence from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea region, across the Middle East, all the way to the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> Having a total 2440 km of



Lucie Švejdová, Iran's Regional Ambitions The Rising Power of Azerbaijan's Neighbour, *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 11, no. 2: 46-67.

© 2017 CEJISS. Article is distributed under Open Access licence: Attribution - NonCommercial 3.0 Unported (cc by-nc 3.0).

coastline, the majority of which borders the (Persian/Arab) Gulf and the Gulf of Oman – which basically allows Iran to control the Strait of Hormuz – Iran enjoys direct access to vital maritime routes for crude oil transport. Since Iran is located in the centre of the world’s two major hydrocarbon-producing regions – the Middle East and the Caspian Sea region<sup>3</sup> – the Islamic Republic naturally possess two vital “means of control” related to energy security: 1) Control over Resources (reservoirs in the Caspian Sea basin + oil-fields on its territory) and 2) Control over Transportation.<sup>4</sup> These two factors themselves, control over resources and transportation, grant Iran natural potential of becoming an energy-producing power.

For decades this power-potential of Iran has been unfulfilled. Basically since the Revolution of 1979, Iran has intermittently faced isolation and heavy international sanctions. The sanctions, as well as the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988, have severely crippled the state’s national economy preventing it from fulfilling its regional-power potential. However, the Iranian regime has proven to be rather resilient, since not even the crippling sanctions prevented Iran from supporting its regional proxies such as Hezbollah, waging the strategy of subversion across the Middle East and pig-headedly pursuing its nuclear program.<sup>5</sup>

The outbreak of the civil war in Syria has proved to be a breaking point for the Islamic Republic. While Iran initially exploited the turmoil of “Arab Spring” to export its own revolutions to states such as Bahrain and Yemen<sup>6</sup> projecting its influence and hoping to install Iran-friendly governments, the outbreak of civil war in Syria threatened the survival of Assad’s government – the Iranian major regional proxy.

The involvement in the conflict which has been dragging on since 2011 has been a heavy burden for the Iranian economy. On 14 July 2015, affected by these circumstances, Iran finally agreed to sign the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the international community has been since divided into two camps – those who perceive it as the new beginning of Iranian rapprochement and those who see it as the beginning of nuclear Iran.<sup>7</sup>

The JCPOA heralded the end of Iranian isolation and offered an opportunity of economic recovery that is likely to provide Iran with the conditions necessary to finally realise its regional-power potential. Whether the future scenario of post-sanctions Iran generates increased economic cooperation and regional stability, or whether Iran

will emerge as a regional hegemon possessing nuclear weapons, is impossible to predict.

That being said, it is precisely the uneasy task of predicting the foreign policy of post-sanction Iran that is of major concern to Azerbaijan, Iran's South Caucasian neighbour. So far, Iranian politics in the South Caucasus region, including its bilateral relations with Azerbaijan, has been primarily pragmatic.<sup>8</sup> Iran's pragmatic behaviour towards South Caucasus is caused chiefly due to the strong presence of other two major powers – Russia and Turkey. As Kamal Gasimov explains, the three powers balance each other: 'In the South Caucasus there is a strong factor of the political interests of Russia and Turkey, so Iran cannot conduct such an aggressive policy as it does in the Middle East.'<sup>9</sup>

With the economic sanctions lifted and JCPOA in place, Iran might be tempted to reassess its pragmatic stance – a decision likely to generate significant consequences for Azerbaijan's national security. It is, indeed, the ambitious task of this article to analyse the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran and to estimate how these relations might be affected by the implications of JCPOA – while Iran's power is rising, will the Islamic Republic abandon its policy of pragmatism towards its South Caucasus neighbour?

## Overview of Azerbaijan-Iran Relations

Bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran have been rather complex, filled with periodically escalating tensions, demographic and territorial challenges, as well as mutually beneficial cooperation. The coexistence of Azerbaijan and Iran is rather complicated due to the fact that Iran possesses 'natural' claims over the Republic of Azerbaijan. This possessive tendency is based on historical, demographic, religious and geopolitical factors.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it has been rather challenging for Azerbaijan to maintain its full sovereignty while being in an immediate proximity of a regional power which attempts to incorporate Azerbaijan into its network of proxy-states.

The first such opportunity to turn Azerbaijan into its proxy was provided by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the proximity of Iran has shaped Azerbaijan's foreign policy and security policy ever since. Once Azerbaijan freed itself from being one of the Soviet satellites in Caucasus, Iran expected to solidify its control over the newly-independent republic.<sup>11</sup>

From a historical perspective, Iran perceived the collapse of the USSR as an opportunity to claim back the territory of modern-day Azerbaijan, which had been seized from the Qajar dynasty by the Russian Empire during the Russo-Persian Wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, the Qajars completely surrendered their holdings in the South Caucasus, including parts of modern-day Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan province.<sup>12</sup> After a brief independence between 1918 and 1920, Azerbaijan fell under the rule of the Soviet Union. Together with Armenia and Georgia, Azerbaijan was a part of a political entity called the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, later each recognised as separate Soviet Republics.<sup>13</sup>

Once the Soviet Union collapsed, Iran expected to fill the power vacuum and exploit the deep historical and cultural links with the South Caucasus.<sup>14</sup> From Iran's perspective, particularly due to such deep historical and demographic ties (Azerbaijan has a 96.9% Shia population)<sup>15</sup> Azerbaijan could have fallen into the Iranian sphere of influence rather effortlessly. In accordance with Article 11 of its constitution, which states that 'All Muslims are one nation. The Islamic Republic of Iran shall try to ensure political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world',<sup>16</sup> Iran embarked on the strategy of "Revolution Export" in the South Caucasus. In the early 1990s, Iran launched a comprehensive program for the export of its 'Islamic Revolution' to the newly independent Caucasian states, including Azerbaijan. The program was aimed at prevention of pro-Western orientation and Islamic revival and included 'export' of fundamentalist clerics and their teaching, as well as creation of charity organisations.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Iran's efforts and expectations, partially because the years of Soviet rule had undermined the ties Shia Islam created between Azeris and Iranians, Azerbaijan decided to pursue independence and nationalism instead of accepting Iranian influence.<sup>18</sup> Azerbaijan's determination to secure its full sovereignty stressed the significance of the two major factors linking Iran and Azerbaijan – demographics and geopolitics – since suddenly these ties no longer presented solely advantages for Iran, but challenges as well.

Although the challenges stemming from these factors are more threatening for Azerbaijan, due to the power-distribution between the two state actors, the demographic factor has proven to be a political challenge for Iran as well. The vision of sovereign and independent Azerbaijan surprised and alarmed the Islamic Republic, which feared

that Azerbaijan's nationalism would lead to separatist tendencies of the large Azeri population in northwestern Iran.<sup>19</sup>

The demographic realities that concern Iran are related to the fact that the population in the Iranian north-western provinces around the city of Tabriz, bordering Azerbaijan and Armenia, are Iranian Azeris – the ethnic descendants of the Oghuz Turks who migrated to the Caucasus Mountains and north-western Iran in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Altogether, Azeris form around a third of Iranian population and similarly to their ethnic counterparts in Azerbaijan, they tend to be more secular. The concentration of the Iranian Azeris along the border provinces nourished Iranian fear of their secessionist aspirations, particularly after it became clear Azerbaijan would not turn into an Iranian proxy anytime soon.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, for Azerbaijan the demographic factors present a constant source of vulnerability. Since Azerbaijan's population consists of a majority of Turkic and Shia Muslims, Azerbaijan's vulnerability regarding the Iranian strategy of 'revolution export' is relatively high. Despite the fact that the majority of Azerbaijan's population is secular, the conditions for Iran to spread its ideology are still favourable due to the mentioned cultural and religious ties. Azerbaijan's government, therefore, needs to be on a constant guard against the spread of subversive ideology originating in Tehran.

Furthermore, Iran can potentially exploit the secular nature of Azerbaijan's government by inciting religious groups against its secular rule in an attempt to charge Azerbaijan's government with violation of their religious freedoms – this modus operandi was adopted by Iran during the "Pearl Revolution" in Bahrain in 2011.<sup>22</sup> Another aspect making Azerbaijan vulnerable to Iranian influence is that the large Azeri minority in Iran is highly integrated into the Islamic revolutionary elite - Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i is Azeri, for instance.<sup>23</sup>

From a geopolitical perspective, probably one of the key sources of friction, and of Iranian desire to control Azerbaijan, is the territorial division of the natural resources of the Caspian Sea in which six countries, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran are involved. Beneath the surface of the Caspian Sea, there are significant oil and natural gas offshore deposits. According to the US Energy Information Administration report published in September 2013, there were 48 billion barrels of oil and 292 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas in proven and probable reserves within the basins of the

Caspian Sea and surrounding area in 2012.<sup>24</sup> It is estimated that there are another 20 billion barrels of oil and 243 Tcf of natural gas yet undiscovered but technically recoverable. However, the territorial disputes over the division of the territorial waters hinder further exploration.<sup>25</sup> From the Iranian perspective, a tighter grip on Azerbaijan, resulting in the transformation of the country into one under the Iranian spheres of influence, would naturally strengthen Iranian control over the resources located in the Caspian Sea.

Lucie  
Švejdová

Together, both demographic and geopolitical factors make Azerbaijan highly attractive in the eyes of the Islamic Republic. Theoretically, this suggests that Iran is likely to perceive any instability within Azerbaijan as a window of opportunity to project its influence over Azerbaijan's politics with the ultimate goal to turn Azerbaijan into its proxy. This does not necessarily suggest that Iran would constantly attempt to orchestrate a *coup d'état* in Baku. However, the more pro-Iranian and less sovereign Azerbaijan is, the better it is from the Iranian political perspective.

There have been several historical precedents in which Iran attempted to exploit Azerbaijan's political vulnerability, the most evident being Iranian support of Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Iranian position on Nagorno-Karabakh can be interpreted as an attempt of 'divide and conquer.' On one hand, Iran recognised Azerbaijan's territorial claim over Nagorno-Karabakh, while on the other Iran tried to portray the conflict as 'a war between Azerbaijan and Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh.'<sup>26</sup>

During the conflict, Iran supported Armenia economically and turned a blind eye to the occupation of Azerbaijan's territory. Although Iran never wished the conflict to escalate into a full-scale war, the Islamic Republic has been more than interested in maintaining the status quo: 'It is considered that as long as the conflict continues, it will have a negative effect on the economic development and the strengthening of statehood of Azerbaijan.'<sup>27</sup> Such a stance implies the genuine interests of the Islamic Republic. Since it maintained this position in the very early stages of Azerbaijan's independence (the most crucial stage of state-building), it suggests Iran was never truly interested in Azerbaijan's consolidation of its sovereignty – quite the opposite. Iranian goal was to retard Azerbaijan's consolidation in order to maximise the influence over the newly independent republic. The Iranian position on Nagorno-Karabakh is therefore a historical precedent in which

Iran tried to seize the opportunity to weaken Azerbaijan's sovereignty.

Azerbaijan's awareness of its own vulnerabilities and Iranian interests prompts it to balance against Iranian influence and presence in the country. This is done by various means; one of the significant aspects of Azerbaijan's balancing is hampering the activity of Iranian proxies on its territory and thus preventing a penetration of its domestic sphere by Iran-sponsored Islamic extremists. This is a typical Iran-designed strategy through which Tehran expands its sphere of influence.

Azerbaijan's government has thus been constantly prompted to find a balance between curbing Iranian influence while simultaneously attempt to avoid antagonising its neighbour, gaining as much as possible from mutual cooperation in various spheres ensuring a peaceful and secure coexistence. Since Iran has not succeeded in turning Azerbaijan into its proxy state, the sources of tensions remain, to a various extent, affecting the bilateral relations even until today.

A slight change in Iranian approach towards Azerbaijan came when Hassan Rouhani was elected President. Contrary to the former Administration of Ahmadinejad, which was rather aggressive, Rouhani's approach is more pragmatic and focused on deepening cooperation between Azerbaijan and Iran. However, this does not imply Iran would abandon its claims over Azerbaijan and its wish to increase political influence over the South-Caucasus republic anytime soon. Iran still pursues these goals, nevertheless by other means such as diplomacy and cooperation in the sphere of energy, culture, trade and economy – the means of so-called 'soft power'.<sup>28</sup>

## The Iran Nuclear Deal: Implications

On 14 July 2015, (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), the European Union (EU) and Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Tehran's nuclear program.<sup>29</sup> According to this deal, Iran agreed to accept some limits on its nuclear programme, such as reduction of its stockpile of enriched uranium and monitoring of its nuclear facilities by the experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency, in exchange for lifting of the economic sanctions imposed by the international community.<sup>30</sup>

In many ways the JCPOA might be understood as Iran's political enabler. The nuclear deal presented a window of opportunity for more

intense cooperation between Iran and the international community in various areas, given the fact Iran offers the world's last 'empty market.' However, after the years of isolation, the Islamic Republic will also gain opportunities for fulfilment of its regional-power aspirations.

Hand in hand with the increased potential for cooperation, the empowerment of Iran might allow a number of factors to carry and increase the level of uncertainty for Azerbaijan and its decision makers. The level of uncertainty relates to 'post-deal' Iranian intentions, direction and character of its policy towards Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus in general. The question troubling Azerbaijan's decision-makers is whether empowered Iran will maintain its policy of pragmatism, or whether Iran will become more aggressive in its efforts to influence Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policy.

Like the rest of the international community, Azerbaijan now awaits what implications the Iran nuclear deal generates in the (near) future. Due to the close proximity and bilateral relations, Azerbaijan's security will be affected by the outcomes of the deal and the path Iran decides to take – either more moderate or increasingly aggressive.

The final outcome and implications of the nuclear deal, a significant achievement of the Obama Administration remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that Iran is currently enjoying a major comeback as a member of the international community. This may change under the newly elected Trump government. However this work limits itself to the conditions facing Iran and Azerbaijan in the immediate aftermath of the nuclear deal.

Regarding the area of the South Caucasus, the nuclear deal presents Iran's second opportunity, the dissolution of the Soviet Union being the very first, to spread its influence in the region more intensively. And it is highly unlikely Iran will miss this chance. The fact that Iran is on the rise is rather evident. Foreign investors had been queuing up even before the sanctions were formally lifted. Iran has, by now, finalised major commercial agreements with a number of European states. On his first tour to Europe after the sanctions had been lifted, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani agreed on a number of major deals, including a €22 billion contract to buy 118 Airbus planes and French carmaker Peugeot announced it had agreed to a joint venture in Iran worth €400m.<sup>31</sup> Earlier in Italy, billions of dollars in business deals had already been signed, reportedly including infrastructure, ship-building, steel, and energy.<sup>32</sup>



In the terms of its increased interaction with Azerbaijan, according to Iran Railroads International Affairs Director Abbas Nazari, Iran and Azerbaijan have signed an agreement to launch a railroad transit system from Tehran to Nakhichevan.<sup>33</sup> Azerbaijan is also interested in receiving ferry traffic from Iran.<sup>34</sup>

Although such deals might contribute to regional development, and despite the fact that Iran currently seeks to portray itself as a reliable member of the international community, there are still certain sources of concern clouding future developments and Iran's intentions. As highlighted by Muath al Wari and Shlomo Brom,<sup>35</sup> there are two Irans – an 'aggressive one' headed by Ayatollah Khamenei and Qasim Soleimani, and 'moderate' Iran led by Hassan Rouhani. It is of great significance which of these fundamentally different models prevails and which one of them will dictate the politics of the Islamic Republic in the near future, therefore, generating far-reaching consequences for regional and international politics. Apart from concluding various international deals, Iran still may take the less peaceful path and choose to spread its regional influence more aggressively.

According to the predictions of the opponents of the nuclear deal, not only will Iran not stop developing nuclear weapons but the lifting of sanctions might accelerate the process. Also, Iran will be capable of increasing its support for its clandestine proxies and their subversion activities in the region. Another argument against the effectiveness of the deal is that, due to a high level of suspicion regarding Iran's intentions, it accelerates nuclear proliferation in the region, particularly in the Gulf.<sup>36</sup>

Since a great deal of attention has been dedicated to the positive implications of the effects of post-deal Iran on Azerbaijan,<sup>37</sup> the following section provides an analysis of the sources of concern in order to balance the view.

## Sources of Concern

Although the Iran nuclear deal presents a whole range of positive opportunities in a number of sectors: economy, trade, tourism, transportation, etc., there are still several sources of concern which should not be overlooked. These sources of concern suggest that despite the undeniable opportunities the deal offers, there is no firm guarantee Iran will abandon its hostile stance towards the West, cease its strategy

of regional subversion and transform itself into a moderate regional power. At this point, a scenario in which post-sanction Iran embarks on an increasingly aggressive path towards becoming a regional hegemon with the possession of nuclear arsenal cannot be dismissed. Particularly since it is too early to predict which path Iran will take – towards becoming a moderate regional power, or an aggressive nuclear hegemony – the following analysis focuses on these sources of concern: 1) Iran's determination to gain a nuclear arsenal, 2), US capability and credibility of the deal, 3) the relevance of ideology, and 4) Iran's revisionist nature and ambition. These may limit excessive enthusiasm regarding predictions about the course of Iran's future policy.

*Lucie  
Švejdová*

### **Iran's Determination to Gain a Nuclear Arsenal**

Iran perceives possession of nuclear weapons as the ultimate mean of survival. From Iran's perception, possession equals the ultimate means guaranteeing survival of the Islamic Republic and its theocratic regime. By building its own nuclear arsenal, and thus nuclear deterrence, Iran will minimise the risk of foreign intervention and will simultaneously enlarge its space for manoeuvring in both the Middle Eastern and the South Caucasus regions. Therefore, Iran's capability of pursuing regional hegemony would increase. This fact itself suggests it is rather unlikely Iran truly intends to abandon its nuclear programme completely.

The very conditions under which the JCPOA was signed might be perceived as a cause for concern, implying Iran is likely to renew its programme after it achieves economic recovery. Barack Obama consistently advocated renewal of engagement with the Islamic Republic when he was a presidential candidate.<sup>38</sup> Once elected, the engagement became a pivot of US foreign policy under Obama's administration. However, Obama's attempts to restore relations with Iran were repeatedly rebuffed by Iran's ayatollahs. Only after Iran's economic situation became truly dire, due to the effect of sanctions imposed by the US and EU in 2011-2012, Iran's leaders agreed to negotiate. Iran's decision to sign the deal is thus a result of soaring inflation, a collapsing economy and the financial burden of Iran's expenses related to its engagement in the Syrian conflict.<sup>39</sup> Prior the deal, Iran was experiencing a severe crisis threatening its national security and survival of its regime – accepting conditions of the nuclear agreement therefore should be per-

ceived as Iran's 'lifesaver', not as a guarantee of intentions to give up its nuclear programme once and for all.

Iran aspires to build a nuclear deterrence that would limit US intervention in the Middle East and interventions against Iran's regional policy – including Iran's policy towards South Caucasus. If Iran manages to acquire nuclear weapons, the US freedom of action regarding its policy and strategic planning in the region would be seriously limited.

In such a scenario, the credibility of US as an ally for the regional actors would suffer a severe blow. These states could no longer rely on the US pledge to protect them and 'they would be less likely to grant U.S. forces access to their soil out of fear of an Iranian nuclear attack.'<sup>40</sup>

A similar effect would be seen in the South Caucasus – the US ability to intervene against Iran's actions would be fundamentally limited, therefore its credibility as an ally for Azerbaijan would further decrease. In the scenario in which Iran acquires nuclear weapons and embarks on an increasingly aggressive strategy to influence Azerbaijan's political sphere (e.g. through the strategy of the "Revolution export" and support of local radical Islamic organisations), the nuclear deterrence would prevent Azerbaijan's allies from intervening.

However, even in the case nuclear Iran becomes reality, Azerbaijan still enjoys significant advantage – particularly over the Gulf countries where the US does not have well-developed and institutionalized nuclear guarantees, as it does with NATO countries such as Turkey – Azerbaijan's closest ally.<sup>41</sup> Considering the fraternal nature of relationships between Azerbaijan and Turkey, the risk of ally abandonment in the case of Turkey is minimal; therefore, Azerbaijan would still have the means, though limited, to balance the potential aggressive policy of nuclear Iran.

Balancing nuclear Iran would be, however, extremely challenging and the complete sovereignty of Azerbaijan's politics would be severely threatened.

## US Capability and Credibility of the Deal

The second source of concern relates to both US ability to enforce conditions of the nuclear deal and to prevent potential offences – in other words, to US capability of ensuring Iran truly abandons its nuclear program completely and does not cheat. Although the deal is a serious effort to prevent Iran from building a nuclear arsenal, it has several

“gaps,” which are the major source of concern undermining the credibility of the deal’s enforcement:

Firstly, Iran has a total of 24 days to delay any inspections. This basically means that if any suspicion arises, the US needs to give Iran 24 days’ notice before the inspection takes place. Secondly, the only penalty for any sort of violation is the re-imposition of international sanctions – ‘That is like saying that for any crime – whether a misdemeanour or a felony – the punishment is the death penalty. In the real world, that means there will be no punishments for anything less than a capital crime.’<sup>42</sup> In practise, if the UN Security Council orders the re-imposition of sanctions, all contracts and deals signed prior the re-imposition of sanctions will be immune – the sanctions renewal does not cancel contracts already signed. As stated in the agreement:

‘Iran considers a reimposition of sanctions as freeing it from all commitments and restrictions under the deal. In other words, the violation would have to be really big for the Security Council to blow up the agreement and reimpose sanctions. That effectively gives Iran a free pass on all manner of small to mid-level violations.’<sup>43</sup>

The troubling question therefore is – what happens if US has to enforce the deal? Since the only punishment for violations is cancellation of the entire deal, it is likely the US will ignore minor violations. This logically leads to the likelihood of what Michael Mandelbaum calls the Iranian salami tactic – ‘small violations of the JCPOA that gradually bring the Islamic Republic closer to a bomb without any single infraction seeming dangerous enough to trigger a severe response.’<sup>44</sup>

Another point undermining the credibility of the nuclear deal is the problem of detection – how will the international inspectors monitor and detect potential violations? Since the deal is far from perfect, Iran does not have to rely only on manipulating physical inspections, but can exploit the existing loopholes in the agreement – defending the potential violations as legal and in accordance with the agreement. For example, on 28 December 2015, a Russian ship left Iran carrying almost all of Iran’s stockpile of low-enriched uranium. Although ridding Iran of the material was a major goal of the multistep agreement, distributing the nuclear fuel amongst Iranian allies – in perfect legal accordance with the deal – is not an ideal option to prevent Iran from building the nuclear weapon sooner or later.<sup>45</sup> Lastly, it should be taken into consideration that the US never prevented a hostile, i.e. non-allied, country from obtaining nuclear weapons.

## The Relevance of Ideology

CEJISS  
2/2017

Ideology still remains *raison d'être* of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It seems so far Iran has pursued a strategy and policy of pragmatism regarding its relations with the states of the South Caucasus. Occasionally, this strategy of pragmatism has even contradicted the principles stated in Iran's constitution, as in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in which instead of supporting a fellow Shiite state of Azerbaijan, Iran sided with Armenia. This is one of the major arguments supporting the claim Iran is always pragmatic and, instead of blindly following its own ideology, Iran rather places the country's national interests first ahead of ideology, diminishing its significance.

This is not necessarily the case. What one needs to keep in mind while unravelling the true Iranian intentions is the greater geopolitical context plus the fact that Iranian national interest runs parallel with the ideological doctrine developed by Ayatollah Khomeini. For instance, it is a fact that by supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan Iran violated its ideological doctrine in a particular case, but is such a claim still relevant in a wider context and in the long term?

The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia can be perceived as an opportunity to increase Iran's power clout over Azerbaijan. From this perspective, the support of Armenia was in perfect harmony with Iranian ideological doctrine – to spread the Shiite corridor. Had Azerbaijan's government collapsed during the conflict, Iran would have with no doubts closed its grip on Azerbaijan.<sup>46</sup> From this perspective, violating the ideological doctrine at some occasions on a tactical level does not compel Iran to abandon it as the overall strategy, in fact, quite the opposite – small violations such as this seem to be phases necessary to achieve the final desired goals. Hence, it is perfectly fine for Iran to do the necessary 'evil' in order to achieve greater ideological goals. In a similar fashion, the nuclear deal with Iran's ideological enemy, the US, can be perceived exactly as such a 'phase of lesser evil' and might be even part of an Iranian strategy of deception.

This by no means aims to counter the argumentation that Iran prefers to pursue a strategy of pragmatism, particularly in the Caspian Sea region. Iran does pursue, and supposedly always will, policy of its own pragmatism – pragmatism that primarily secures survival of the Islamic republic. The survival of the state will always remain central since it equals the survival of Iran as a vanguard of Islam – the symbolic flagship of Shia Islamism. From this perspective, even the moves and

policies that seemingly contradict the Iranian ideological doctrine are only means to the end: the ultimate fulfilment of Khomeini's doctrine. In this case, the end justifies the means.

The Iranian ideological doctrine and the legacy of 1979 Revolution continues to shape Iranian national interests and foreign policy even today. Iran has never diverted from the path set by Khomeini's ideological doctrine. One must not forget the fact that Iran is a 'revolutionary exporter.' Iran uses the strategy of 'Revolution Export' to spread its regional influence and achieve its national goals – following the path of the 'legacy of the Revolution.'

The US under Obama's Administration, where the pro-Iranian mood is high, claimed that Iran and the US are 'natural allies.' The designers of JCPOA seem to hope and believe that the deal will set the path for restoration of US-Iran relations and simply continue as if 1979 never happened.

However, Iran of today is not pre-revolutionary Iran and, logically, there cannot be business as if the revolution did not happen. It seems the advocates of the JCPOA count only on the existence of the 'Moderate Iran' and completely ignore the aggressive rhetoric of the Iranian Supreme Leader – the most powerful man in the country who dictates Iran's domestic and foreign policy and who sets the country's political direction. In February 2013, Ayatollah Khamenei, the ultimate decision maker, admitted the negotiations with the West were a deception, publicly stating: 'I am not a diplomat. I am a revolutionary.'<sup>47</sup>

Western decision makers and politicians, in particular, seem to suffer from a condition which makes them undermine the credibility of Iran's Spiritual Leader. They tend to pay less attention to the rhetoric of the Spiritual Leader, giving it less credibility. Instead, they choose to interact with the 'moderate' part, represented by Hassan Rouhani, and perhaps attributing him more power than he actually wields. This is, at the very least, reckless and irresponsible since for now it is the Spiritual Leader who wields absolute power over Iran's future. As long as this remains reality, perhaps more scepticism and caution is advised.

*Lucie  
Švejdová*

## **Iran's Revisionist Nature and Ambition**

As a state created by the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the revisionist nature is built-in in the mind-set of the Islamic Republic. Iran aspires to alter the regional status quo and become a regional hegemon.

Iran's revisionism is historically deeply rooted, long predating the 1979 Revolution. Iran's hegemonic ambitions date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Safavid Dynasty sought to distance itself from the Sunni Ottoman Empire. For this reason, Safavids established the Shiite branch of Islam as the main religion, Iran officially becoming a Shiite country in 1502. Already as the Shiite power, the Persian Empire competed with the Ottomans and expanded its control to the Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan and to the areas in the south Caucasus.<sup>48</sup>

In the modern times, the very establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the legacy of the Revolution form the very essence of the state and its politics. Since 1979, despite decades of nearly complete isolation, Iran has never deviated from its quest to rise as a regional power. This eliminates the possibility that this political stance would change in the near future. Given the fact that even under heavy international sanctions Iran never abandoned its goals to influence regional politics, supporting its clandestine proxies such as Hezbollah,<sup>49</sup> the Islamic Republic of Iran is unlikely to make any significant alterations regarding its strategic goals once it is empowered.

The scenario in which Iran gives up its aggressive hegemonic ambitions and becomes a moderate member of the international community is likely to remain elusive as long as the Twelver system exists. Unless there are significant changes in the fabric of Iran's theocratic regime, Iran's revisionist ambitions, including the strategy of revolution export, will remain intact – for being the flagship of Shia Islam and the proliferation of Iran's Islamic Revolution form the *raison d'être* of the Islamic Republic even today.

The so-called “Arab Spring” provided Iran with the long-desired window of opportunity to pursue its regional aspirations. Thanks to a global tendency to generalise the origins of the revolutions that occurred in the spring of 2011, erroneously assigning the revolts a universal cause, Iran seized the opportunity to start turning its hegemonic ambitions into reality.

By exploiting international misperceptions about the origins of the revolutions, Iran orchestrated revolts in its target states where it attempted a *coup d'état*. By pursuing this strategy of revolution export (for which the blueprint was set during the Revolution of 1979), Iran sought to break out of its isolation and create a string of proxy states. The ultimate goal was to create the “axis” of proxy states by installing new pro-Iranian regimes that would be directly controlled by Tehran.<sup>50</sup>

By this strategy, Iran could establish itself as a regional power and fulfil its long-term ambition of the regional hegemony. Perhaps the most evident example of this subversive strategy was the instigation of the “Pearl Revolution” in Bahrain, 2011.<sup>51</sup> Besides Syria and Bahrain, Iran had also been actively involved in Lebanon and Yemen, operating via its proxies and “military advisors.”<sup>52</sup> As stated by Hanin Ghaddar, ‘Iran believes that the Shiites in the region are the protectors of its political agenda and wants to unite all Shiites under its umbrella irrespective of the borders between countries or states.’<sup>53</sup>

In the foreseeable future, due to its expenditures in the Middle Eastern campaigns, it is unlikely Iran would launch another large-scale campaign in the areas beyond the Middle East, such as the South Caucasus. However, due to the boost of confidence and rehabilitation of its position amongst the international society resulting from the nuclear deal, Iran’s ambitions for regional hegemony are likely to increase. Rather than intervening directly, the Islamic Republic is likely to actively and perhaps even more aggressively pursue its strategy of revolution export in the targeted states which Iran wishes to incorporate into its Shia corridor. Due to the given demographic factors, (which provide opportunity), geographic proximity and a long-term history of Iranian interest, Azerbaijan is indeed an attractive target.

The outbreak of the conflict in Syria and the rise of ISIS provided Iran with the long-desired window of opportunity. The chaos and the power vacuum in states such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen, have enabled Iran to gain control over these territories, spread the intended Shiite corridor and consolidate its power position in the regions of the Middle East and South Caucasus – now more than ever Iran has the real opportunity to abide by its constitution and spread the borders of its Islamic state.

## Conclusion

The JCPOA does not ultimately prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons in the future; it mainly delays the process of acquisition – in Obama’s own words: ‘the US decided for an imperfect deal.’<sup>54</sup>

Not much has changed regarding Iran’s ‘Revolutionary Nature’ – Iran still aspires to achieve regional hegemony and export its ideology. The Islamic Republic still seeks to influence Azerbaijan’s domestic and foreign politics, still claiming historical rights to Azerbaijan’s territo-



ries. Azerbaijan continues to be theoretically vulnerable to Iran's influence, strategy of revolution export and expansionism.

So far, a single clear result of post-sanction Iran can be identified: Iran is emerging empowered, both politically as well as economically, no longer isolated. Foreign investors have already started flooding Iran's market and Iran has embarked on a path towards a full recovery.

The intriguing question, whether an empowered Iran will become increasingly aggressive in spreading its influence and interfering in Azerbaijan's political sphere, remains for now without a solid answer. However, there are facts which shall serve as a guide for predicting intentions and future course of post-sanction Iran's politics.

First, post-sanction Iran will have more resources to pursue its ideological doctrine by the 'old means' – the way it did prior to the deal – by supporting its proxies, subversive groups, radical Islamic organisations, exporting radical scholars, etc.

Second, post-sanction Iran will have a whole range of new methods of influencing regional politics, both in the Middle East and in the South Caucasus. Even if Iran continues its policy of pragmatism regarding its relations with Azerbaijan: it will have numerous new tools of influencing Azerbaijan's political sphere. Contrary to the old means of influencing regional politics, by signing the JCPOA Iran has gained the so-called means of 'soft power' such as financial investments, energy projects, tourism, deepened economy cooperation – availability of this means of power (on such a substantial scale) is unprecedented in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

What might be of a particular concern for Azerbaijan, regarding this soft power, is the diplomatic power Iran is likely to gain within the international community. Along with Iran's economic recovery and opening up markets for foreign investors, Iran's diplomatic power is likely to receive a significant boost.

By using its increasing diplomatic power, Iran might translate its rising diplomatic influence into support of Islamist groups across the globe (such as the Muslim Brotherhood), this time within the legal political framework. In context of Azerbaijan, such lobbying might possibly lead to increased international pressure on Azerbaijan to legalise active participation of religious groups in state politics, for example to run in Parliamentary elections. The active participation of religious groups certainly does not pose any particular challenge by itself; however, the challenge emerges once the religious organisations are closely

linked to Iran. If, one day, pro-Iranian religious groups make their way into Azerbaijan's political life, Iran's influence in Azerbaijan will significantly increase. Limiting Iran's interference into Azerbaijan's domestic affairs might then become increasingly challenging.

Although claiming that Iran wishes to turn Azerbaijan into one of its proxy states, thus incorporating it into Iran's string of Shiite states, may appear extreme, it is an undeniable fact that turning Azerbaijan into an Iranian proxy would benefit Iran on its path towards becoming the regional hegemony.

Due to Iran's need to focus on economic recovery, its costly involvement in the Syrian conflict and subversive campaigns in the Middle East, it seems rather unlikely Iran would become increasingly aggressive in the South Caucasus region in the near future – the Islamic Republic cannot be interested in opening 'another front' while engaged in its campaigns in the Middle East – at least not while these campaigns last.

Since Iran's interest to influence Azerbaijan's political sphere persists it is likely to exploit the newly acquired soft means to do so. Therefore, the time to abandon the strategy of "soft" deterrence and balancing Iran is also at hand. The period after the lifting of sanctions is the time when caution, alertness and awareness is strongly advised due to the greater window of opportunity Iran currently possesses. Iran has, for the first time after decades of isolation, the opportunity to fully reach its status of regional power and that itself suggests caution and a potential pre-emptive approach for Azerbaijan.

The decision regarding economic integration and cooperation with post-sanction Iran made today will affect the level of influence Iran might have over Azerbaijan's politics tomorrow. To conclude, Iranian empowerment has nearly equal potential to contribute both to regional development as well as destabilisation.



LUCIE ŠVEJDOVÁ is affiliated to the Department of International Relations and European Studies at Metropolitan University Prague and can be reached at [Svejdovalucie@seznam.cz](mailto:Svejdovalucie@seznam.cz)

This work is a result of research funded and organised by the Azerbaijan International Development Agency (AIDA) of the MFA of Azerbai-

*Lucie  
Švejdová*

jan Republic, conducted by the author in Baku, Azerbaijan within the framework of a research-fellowship program at the Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM), November – December 2015.

CEJSS  
2/2017

## Notes

- 2 For a detailed account on Iran's political history see: Dilip Hiro (2013), *Inside Central Asia*, Duckworth Overlook (Kindle edition), chapter 7.
- 3 George Freedman and Robert Kaplan (2012), 'Confronting Iran's Growing Ambitions (Agenda),' STRATFORvideo analysis, 09 March, available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsYmm-dDxvM&t=2s>> (accessed 10 November 2015). Data obtained from: CIA Factbook, available at: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>> (accessed 02 December 2015).
- 4 For a detailed analysis of the "means of control" related to the energy security, see: Mitchell A. Belfer (2010), *Dropping the Anchor, An EU Naval Approach to Energy Security*, PROTIS Nakladatelstvi, pp. 10-16.
- 5 Ilan Berman (2015), *Iran's Deadly Ambition*, Encounter Books, pp. 1-45.
- 6 Berman (2015), pp. 27-45.
- 7 Efraim Inbar (2015), 'Six Strikes against the Nuclear Deal with Iran,' *BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 301*, 15 July, available at: <http://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/six-strikes-against-the-nuclear-deal-with-iran> (accessed 02 December 2015).
- 8 Caroline Farris (2013), 'Geopolitics Trump Religion in Iranian-Azeri Relations,' *The Diplomat*, 07 August, available at: < <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/geopolitics-trump-religion-in-iran-azerbaijan-relations>> (accessed 25 November 2015). See also: Amanda Paul (2015), 'Iran's policy in the South Caucasus – Between pragmatism and realpolitik' in South Caucasus Between integration and fragmentation.' *Center for Strategic Studies (SAM)*, May 2015, pp. 53-61, available at: <[http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub\\_5598\\_the\\_south\\_caucasus\\_-\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_5598_the_south_caucasus_-_low_res.pdf)> (accessed 10 November 2015).
- 9 An interview with Kamal Gasimov, an analyst expert at SAM, conducted on 21 December 2015, Baku, Azerbaijan.
- 10 See for example: 'AZERBAIJAN: INDEPENDENT ISLAM AND THE STATE,' *International Crisis Group working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide*, Europe Report N°191, 25 March 2008, pp. 7-8. Houman A. Sadri (2010), *Global Security Watch: The Caucasus States*, Praeger, pp. 27-65 Dilip Hiro (2013), chapter 7.
- 11 Gallia Lenderstrauss and Iftah Celniker (2012), 'Azerbaijan and Iran: Hostile Approach but Limited Rivalry,' *INSS Insight No. 366*, 26 August, pp. 1-2, available: <<http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=5218>> (accessed 10 November 2015).
- 12 Sadri (2010), p. 9.
- 13 Sadri (2010), p. 31.
- 14 Vusal Gasimli, Zaur Shiriyev, Zulfiyya Valiyeva (2011), 'Iranian-Armenian

- Relations, Geopolitical Reality versus Political Statements,' *Center for Strategic Studies*, Baku, p. 4.
- 15 Data obtained from: CIA factbook, available: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/aj.html> (accessed 20 November 2015).
  - 16 The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, available: < <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution.html>> (accessed 20 November 2015).
  - 17 Alexander Murinson (2010), 'Iran Targets Azerbaijan,' *BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 110*, 23 June, available: <<http://besacenter.org/perspectives-papers/iran-targets-azerbaijan/>> (accessed 20 November 2015).
  - 18 Sadri (2010), pp. 53-54.
  - 19 Sadri (2010), pp. 53-54.
  - 20 Caroline Farris (2013), 'Geopolitics Trump Religion in Iranian-Azeri Relations,' *The Diplomat*, 07 August, available: < <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/geopolitics-trump-religion-in-iran-azerbaijan-relations/>> (accessed 05 December 2015)
  - 21 Ibid.
  - 22 Mitchell A. Belfer (2011), 'Iran's Bahraini Ambitions,' *The Wall Street Journal*, 06 October, available: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204612504576608852457881450>> (accessed 15 January 2016).
  - 23 Murinson (2010).
  - 24 Data obtained from EIA, US Energy Information Administration; available: <<http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=12911>> (accessed 10 November 2015)
  - 25 Data obtained from EIA, US Energy Information Administration; available: <<http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=12911>> (accessed 10 November 2015)
  - 26 Gasimli, Shiriyev, Valiyeva (2011), p. 26
  - 27 Ibid.
  - 28 Interview with Mr. Mesiaga Mahammadi, an expert analyst SAM, conducted on 10 December 2015 at the premises of SAM, Baku, Azerbaijan.
  - 29 A complete document available: <<http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa>> (accessed 10 December 2015)
  - 30 Michael Mandelbaum (2015), 'How to Prevent an Iranian Bomb,' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 6, November/December, pp. 19-25.
  - 31 'Rouhani hails 'new chapter' in Iranian-French ties', *BBC News*, 28 January 2016, available here: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35427570>> (accessed 29 January 2016).
  - 32 Siobhán O'Grady (2016), 'Italy Wants Business Deals With Iran So Badly That It Covered Up Nude Statues,' *Foreign Policy*, 26 January, available: < <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/26/italy-wants-business-deals-with-iran-so-badly-that-it-covered-up-nude-statues>> (accessed 29 January 2016).
  - 33 'Iran, Azerbaijan sign agreement on railroad,' *Trend News Agency*, 29 January 2016, available: <<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2486541.html>> (accessed 29 January 2016).
  - 34 'Azerbaijan ready to send ferries to Iran,' *AZERNEWS*, 15 January 2016, availa-

- ble: <<http://www.azernews.az/business/91688.html>> (accessed 29 January 2016).
- 35 'The Iran Nuclear Deal: The View from the Region,' *Woodrow Wilson Center, The Middle East Program*, published on 29 July 2015. The full record available here: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOPRjF8rqWs>>
- 36 Conor Gaffey (2015), 'Iran Deal Could Spark Gulf Nuclear Arms Race,' *Newsweek*, 15 May, available: <<http://europa.newsweek.com/iran-deal-could-spark-nuclear-arms-race-gulf-327357>> (accessed 25 January 2016)
- 37 See, for example: 'Azerbaijan, Iran discuss how to strengthen cooperation,' *Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency*, 30 September 2014 available here: <[www.azertag.az/en/print/799762](http://www.azertag.az/en/print/799762)> (accessed 10 November 2015). 'Azerbaijan, Iran to sign 10 documents,' *TREND News Agency*, 5 November 2014 available here: <<http://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/business/2329979.html>> (accessed 10 November 2015). 'Azerbaijan's deputy minister: Lifting sanctions from Iran will improve situation in region,' *TASS Russian News Agency*, 26 October 2015 available here: <<http://tass.ru/en/economy/831789>> (accessed 10 November 2015). And also: Ilgar Gurbanov (2015), 'Post-sanctions Iran: Implications for the Southern Gas Corridor and Opportunities for Azerbaijan,' *Newsletter of the European Centre for Energy and Resource Security* Issue 49, Oct/Nov, pp. 4-8., available: <<http://sam.az/uploads/PDF/EUCERS%20Newsletter.pdf>> (accessed 10 November 2015).
- 38 Berman (2015), pp. 1-2.
- 39 Berman (2015), pp. 1-2. See also: Alan Dershowitz (2015), *The Case Against the Iran Deal: How Can We Now Stop Iran from Getting Nukes?* RosettaBooks, Kindle edition, Part II (location 894).
- 40 Micah Zenko (2015), 'The Big Winners of the Iran Nuclear Deal,' *Foreign Policy*, 15 July 2015 available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/15/the-big-winners-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal-pentagon-defense-planners/> (accessed 7 December 2015).
- 41 Micah Zenko (2015), 'The Big Winners of the Iran Nuclear Deal,' *Foreign Policy*, 15 July, available: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/15/the-big-winners-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal-pentagon-defense-planners>> (accessed 07 December 2015)
- 42 Robert Satloff (2015), 'What's Really Wrong with the Iran Nuclear Deal,' *The Washington Institute*, 14 July, available: <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/whats-really-wrong-with-the-iran-nuclear-deal>> (accessed 12 December 2015).
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Mandelbaum (2015), pp. 19-25 and p. 22.
- 45 David E. Sanger and Andrew E. Kramer (2015), 'Iran Hands Over Stockpile of Enriched Uranium to Russia,' *International New York Times*, 28 December, available: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/29/world/middleeast/iran-hands-over-stockpile-of-enriched-uranium-to-russia.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/29/world/middleeast/iran-hands-over-stockpile-of-enriched-uranium-to-russia.html?_r=1)> (accessed 10 January 2016).
- 46 Gasimli, Shiriyev, Valiyeva (2011), p. 26.
- 47 David E. Sanger (2013), 'Supreme Leader of Iran Rejects Direct Talks With U.S.,' *International New York Times*, 07 February, available here: <<http://>

- www.nytimes.com/2013/02/08/world/middleeast/irans-supreme-leader-ayatollah-ali-khameini-rejects-direct-talks-with-us.html?\_r=0> (accessed 08 December 2015).
- 48 Soner Cagaptay, James F. Jeffrey, and Mehdi Khalaji (2015), 'Iran Won't Give Up on Its Revolution,' *The Washington Institute*, 26 April, available: <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-wont-give-up-on-its-revolution>> (accessed 15 December 2015)
- 49 Michael Eisenstadt, Simon Henderson, Michael Knights, Matthew Levitt, and Andrew J. Tabler (2015), 'The Regional Impact of Additional Iranian Money,' *The Washington Institute*, 28 July, available: <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-regional-impact-of-additional-iranian-money>> (accessed 02 February 2016).
- 50 Berman (2015), pp. 1-45.
- 51 Mitchell A. Belfer (2011), 'Iran's Bahraini Ambitions,' *The Wall Street Journal*, 06 October, available: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204612504576608852457881450>> (accessed on 15 January 2016).
- 52 See: Hossein Bastani (2015), 'Iran quietly deepens involvement in Syria's war,' *BBC News*, 20 October, available: <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34572756>> (accessed 15 November 2015). Iran's involvement in Yemen: 'Hezbollah helping arm Yemen Houthis: report,' *now News* 21 October 2015, available: <<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566093-hezbollah-helping-arm-yemen-houthis-report>> (accessed 16 November 2015).
- 53 Hanin Ghaddar (2015), 'Tehran and Moscow: a shaky alliance,' *now News* 27 October, available: <<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentary/566128-tehran-and-moscow-a-shaky-alliance>> (accessed 15 November 2015).
- 54 Barack Obama in an interview with Thomas L. Friedman for New York Times published on 23 July 2015, available: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-Rxqhmworo>> (accessed 02 February 2016). And also: 'Understanding the Iran Nuclear Deal,' American Security Project, The discussants include Admiral William Fallon, USN (Retired); Dr Trita Parsi, who is the founder and president of the National Iranian American Council; and Laura Rozen, who writes the Back Channel news-blog for "Al-Monitor, published on 4 August 2015, available here: <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Video/Detail/?id=193298&lng=en>> (accessed 02 February 2015).

Lucie  
Švejdová