

# A Foreign Policy Analytic Approach to European Decision-Making regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

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A comprehensive analysis of European decision-making processes regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between 2014 and 2015

Master thesis

by

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## **Abstract**

Starting out with observing the puzzling reality of diplomatic relations between the United States and the European Union recently, this thesis sheds some light on the decision-making process of the European Union. This complex process requires not only a strong theoretical foundation but also a structured academic approach. Neoclassical Realism (NCR) and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) together form the backbone to answer the main research question: Which factors are responsible for the initial and continued EU support of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action, better known as the Iran Deal? Neoclassical Realism as a macro theory gives a strong backbone in international relations theory to FPA as an approach. The combination of both theoretical frameworks forms the base of the empirical analysis. Extrapolated from this, four major factors of influence are found: influence of the leader, the bureaucratic process, domestic actors, and cultural influences. Analyzing the EU in the context of the JCPOA regarding these factors showed that the leader, foreign policy representative Mogherini likely had a position of influence, in combination with the governing bodies of the EU. The oil and gas lobby and culture are also likely factors of influence, although it is harder to prove a direct link in this respect.

## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

EEAS	European External Action Service
EFP	European Foreign Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FPDM	Foreign Policy Decision-Making
IR	International Relations
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JPOA	Joint Plan Of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCR	Neoclassical Realism
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty

## 1. Introduction

It is obviously needless to say that the use of nuclear weapons is dangerous, way more dangerous than any other destructive force created by humans. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are clear examples of this tremendous destructive power (Schultz et al., 2007). Nuclear explosives do not make any distinction between combatants and non-combatants, but rather annihilate everyone and everything in the vicinity of the explosion. Nuclear weapons are truly weapons of mass destruction. Since in 1968 (almost) all states agreed that these weapons are far too destructive for any conflict situation, the so-called Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was signed. According to this treaty, all states that at that point in time already possessed nuclear weapons were allowed to keep those, with the promise however that their stockpiles would be gradually reduced in size. All other signatories promised to stop any future development of nuclear weapons. Even though throughout the years these promises were not always held up and more signatories are now believed to have nuclear weapons at their disposal, since 1970, when the NPT entered into force, the total number of nuclear weapons around the world has been greatly reduced (Joyner, 2011). As said, there are a few countries that did not sign the treaty at all and (secretly) continued developing nuclear weapon technology (amongst them, mainly India, Pakistan and Israel). There are also some states that did indeed sign the NPT, but nevertheless have tried (and still try) to develop nuclear weapons. Over the past years it has come to light that the Iranian government has clearly been working on the development of nuclear weapons (Einhorn, 2004). This led some of the most influential nations to negotiate a deal with Iran that would render it unable to produce nuclear weapons. Chaired by the European Union, the so-called P5+1 group, composed of the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany, signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the Iranian government.

The United States and Iran have a long history of hostility and are the most conflicting nations in the JCPOA agreement. But other countries like France also voiced strong criticism of Iran's actions (Cherkaoui, 2018). Negotiating the JCPOA was therefore a great achievement and the diplomatic ordeal that had to be overcome cannot be underestimated. In 2018 however, the United States under President Trump officially withdrew from the deal and resorted to renewed hostilities. The European response was united, which as such is quite rare in the EU, condemning the actions of the Trump administration. Breaking with the American policy of maximum pressure on Iran, the European member states strongly defended the deal (Motamedi, 2020). It is quite rare in international politics that the European NATO members so strongly disagree with their U.S. ally. In September 2020, the Trump administration pushed for United Nations sanctions on Iran, further proving its different stance on the deal. The majority of the Security Council disagreed. The U.S. seems to isolate itself further and further, not only from the international community but also from its historical allies in the EU (Motamedi, 2020). This incident is not unique, and conflicts between the EU member states and the United States seem to become more common. However, economic conflicts have always been more common than conflicts on matters of international diplomacy. Even though the Iraq war was an issue for many EU states, they have not unanimously condemned it – unlike the withdrawal from the JCPOA (Mousavian, 2018). This raises questions, not only diplomatic and security questions but academic questions as well. To figure out what drove this EU decision, this thesis will analyze the EU decision-making process regarding the JCPOA.

### 1.2. Empirical puzzle

Why does the EU hold on to the JCPOA agreement, while the Trump administration has unequivocally abandoned it? From the moment he got elected President Trump set steps to get rid of

the deal, while some leaders of EU member states spoke out in favor of it. One might wonder, why do some EU states favor a deal with a hostile nation over cooperation with a historical friend (even if this friendship has become more strained lately)? Is it because there are major stakeholders within the EU that want the JCPOA agreement continued, or are the values of peace and security through denuclearization held in such high regard among European powers? Or is it simply just to save face and show an independent stance? The European Union as such represents the shared interests of all member states, mainly those that are part of the deal with Iran, but it is also likely that it has its own interests. On top of this, EU foreign policy is changing over time, new institutions are created and power shifts. A comprehensive analysis of a recent major breakthrough in decision-making power of the EU will help to understand the current state of the European Union when it comes to foreign affairs. An analysis of the EU decision-making process can shed some light on the questions raised before and in particular answer the following research question: Which (f)actors are responsible for the initial and continued EU support of the JCPOA.

### **1.3. Theoretical approach**

In order to answer this question, a structured and in-depth analysis of EU decision-making is necessary. Diplomatic deals like the JCPOA are complex and multi-layered. Geopolitical and security considerations, economic and societal interests are all part of it. This implies that the decision-making process involves many stakeholders, therefore complicated to map. For that reason, this research requires a strong theoretical foundation and a structured approach in analyzing foreign policy.

Neoclassical Realism sets the theoretical limits for the approach of this thesis. As a broad theory of international relations, NCR concerns itself with macro-level events and it tries to create a structural approach to analyze international relations. Neoclassical Realism emphasizes power constraints on different states and how these have an effect on their decision-making. Combining insights from Realism, Neorealism and Social Constructivism, Neoclassical Realism looks at international relations from a more state-specific perspective. This means that domestic (f)actors are seen as crucial for short-term decision-making, but also that power relations limit the scope of options for political leaders. However, NCR does not provide a very structured approach to analyze specific stakeholders in foreign policy decision-making. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), on the other hand, does provide such a structured approach. FPA has always been case-study orientated and therefore also policy-specific. Foreign Policy Analysis provides the necessary bridge between macro theory and structured micro analysis and allows for specific answers.

### **1.4. Methodology**

This case study of the decision-making process of the JCPOA will attempt to generate more insight in the European decision-making process in general. The way this process is analyzed with the help of process-tracing methodology. The goal is to get insight into the 'black box' and unveil the causal pathways that influence decision-making in the EU. As the research question states, the goal is to identify factors of influence in this process and how they influence the process. This analysis will be an explaining-outcome case study where the outcome is the result of the JCPOA and the causal pathway to identify the several influences. This specific case is a high-profile negotiation and will be generalizable to more cases like it where high stakes are at play. FPA theory will be used to create a framework for this analysis. The three main distinct influences that come from FPA theory are analyzed in similar ways with help of literature analysis. They do however all form separate causal connections. This will be elaborated upon more in the methodology chapter and the analysis itself.

While the main methodological approach is set out in chapter 4, some of the practical applications are best fit in the analysis chapter itself.

### **1.5. Relevance**

This thesis does not only look for an answer to the research question, but also tries to explore the theoretical link between FPA and NCR. Various authors have noted the relevance of both theories for each other, but nevertheless FPA is hardly mentioned in NCR literature (Hudson & Day, 2019). While FPA scholars are mostly focused on their own sub-field of international relations theory, the same goes for many Neoclassical Realists. There are some authors who previously have explored the link and complementarity of both theories, but we are still far from any form of integration. In addition to trying to analyze how and in particular why the EU still remains supportive of the JCPAO, a theoretical discussion is included in this thesis as well. On top of this FPA theory can sometimes still lack empirical substance. As elaborated upon in the previous section, not many comprehensive empirical FPA studies have looked at all different factors of influence like this thesis. This empirical analysis is however necessary to really get insight in which factors influence EU decision-making. Knowing what those factors are opens up the way for more in depth research like process tracing the exact effects of these factors. This thesis lacks the scope to do this for every single possible factor but is more explorative in nature allowing for more in depth follow up research on the subject.



## **2. Theoretical Foundation**

### **2.1. Classical Realism**

In a sense, the foundations of Classical Realism date back thousands of years, all the way back to the writings of Thucydides. His initial ideas of power and survival were further developed by Machiavelli and many others, but it took to 1948 when Morgenthau in his *Politics among Nations* developed a more cohesive theory. Over the years, its popularity rose and declined, but especially after the 9/11 events Realism once more became an influential theoretical approach in international relations (Williams, 2004). The key notion of Realism is that humans (and states) are by nature in search of power; their actions and motivations can be defined in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1948).

Achieving power is a means to achieve security for yourself and your people. However, a constant strive for power will also lead to a continuous threat of violence and war. Bell (2010) notes that states are not primarily preoccupied with international peace, but rather with their own security and safety. Most Realist scholars therefore look at any international treaty and international norm as distractions that will no longer matter when they no longer serve the power interests of the state. Waltz (2001) compares international relations to a game, a game where survival is at stake. Therefore, he argues, states and people in power are very unlikely to play by the rules. Additionally, there is no real referee to enforce agreements between parties. This makes the system of states on the international level a system of anarchy.

Based on this analysis, the main way to achieve peace and stability is through a balance of power, with no states or alliances of states having a clear power advantage over the others. In this state of a balance of power, war is unlikely because instead of bringing security it would bring insecurity and threats. Morgenthau (1948) argues that another important factor in keeping states in check is prudence. State leaders are (or at least, should be) aware of the volatile nature of international relations and therefore act with prudence. Acting in a prudent way means to restrain oneself in using violence and carefully weighing all decisions.

Realism in the field of foreign policy focuses on the power of a state relative to other states. In this approach, within-state actors are taken into consideration, without any clear structure, however. Realism fails to produce reliable hypotheses that can be tested, nor does it offer a systematic approach for researchers. It's more a philosophical theory, rather than a deductive theory (Kitchen, 2012). According to critics, the theory has been constructed over thousands of years, but never really turned into a methodologically sound approach (Lobell et al., 2009).

### **2.2. Neorealism**

Neorealism, an approach mainly founded by Kenneth Waltz, attempts to deal with the criticism brought forward against Realism. It overcomes the chaos and unclarity that Realism brings when analyzing geopolitical conflicts, by leaving the complexities of the state out of it. According to Waltz (2004), a theory should be a simplified version of reality, leaving out everything except the most important factors. Just like Realism, Waltz emphasizes the importance of power and security, overriding all other factors. He claims, however, that it is not human nature but rather the anarchical system itself that make states striving for power and security. Not people are to blame, but the system. Waltz compares states in the international arena to companies on a domestic level, since both share the ultimate goal: survival (Waltz, 1979). Decisions are influenced, sometimes decided, by states'

relative power positions, defined in terms of material power. Military and economic power are considered to be the most important leverage instruments (Rose, 1998).

In Neorealism, the world is simplified to nations that strive for security. Their survival is at stake, in a game for their lives without a referee. This context is the ultimate determining factor of states' actions. Neorealism therefore is a system level theory, leaving out the unit level in an in-depth analysis. It therefore does achieve the goal of producing testable theories and hypotheses, but it does lack in explanatory power in specific cases – for instance the Iran nuclear deal. This is because complex mechanisms compile important foreign policy decisions, like the Iran deal. States are analyzed as individual actors or black boxes that have unitary goals and reasons to act (Lobell, 2009).

### **2.3. Social Constructivism**

In addition to the previously mentioned theories, Wendt (1992) vouches for a different approach. He states that in the debate between rationalist theories, there is no real debate about the assumption that actors are rational and driven by survival and power. Wendt, among others, contests this view. According to him, Social Constructivism is of crucial importance for the development of NCR because it adds to the limited Realist approach of rational behavior and opens up room for more explanatory variables. The cultural approach is widely accepted in most NCR theory and in FPA as well. Therefore, it is important to understand the founding insights of Social Constructivism. "Social constructivism is a truism that social reality does not fall from heaven, but that human agents construct and reproduce it through their daily practice" (Risse, 2004, p. 145). In other words, defining an objective reality is impossible because everything, research included, is subject to human interpretation. Our culture and social background shape the way in which we look at the world. Social Constructivism contests the Realist claims of individualism and rational choice (Elster & Hylland, 1989). Even if they to some extent exist in familiar cultures, they are not representative of the entire world. Our social ties can overrule our 'rational' behavior. This means that actors, or agents, in international relations are unable to separate themselves from the structure they operate in. Or, in the words of Wendt (1992, p. 399), "structure and agency are mutually constitutive".

A major weakness of Social Constructivism is that all interests are expressed in the form of social ideas (Kitchen, 2010). This does not allow for a clear distinction between material and immaterial interests, because one always seems to follow the other. Therefore, causal research is very difficult, if not impossible. Neoclassical Realism adds that social ties can situationally overrule rational choice. It does, however, make a distinction between materialistic interests and socially constructed ideas (Kitchen, 2010).

### **2.4. Neoclassical Realism**

Acknowledging many of the convincing arguments raised by the previously mentioned theories, Neoclassical Realism develops a broader understanding. In many ways the Realist tradition is still the starting point, as Neorealist scholars agree that in the long term the international system is defined by power relations. In the short term, however, single policy decisions pursued by states are rarely based on power principles only (Lobell et al., 2009). In the short run, the anarchical international system allows for many different actions to be taken by states, sometimes maybe even in conflict with their own direct power interests. In the long run, however, states may put their survival at risk by ignoring systematic threats (Lobell et al., 2009). NCR therefore tries to balance between short-term complicated decision-making processes and long-term constraints posed by the system; filling a gap left by classical Realism and Neorealism. On the other hand, it also takes the socially constructed

nature of reality into account, by valuing ideas as a factor in international relations and understanding that actors are not always fully rational in the Realist sense.

Neoclassical Realism starts with a similar assumption as Neorealism: the international system is conflict-prone by nature. It differs a lot, however, in terms of dependent variables. As stated before, Neorealism tries to extrapolate systemic explanations in analyzing state behavior within this system. NCR tries to explain particular cases, as well as how the international system interacts with domestic factors. So, although the distribution of power limits the options of some states to act in aggressive ways, it is not always the main constraint or motivation. NCR tries to explain policy outcomes across states with similar external power constraints (Rose, 1998). Because the scope of these two-level explanations is so broad, it is usually best used in limited case studies. For that reason, this approach is a strong theoretical foundation for this thesis. It does, however, lack a structural approach on how to analyze decision making.

## **2.5. Foreign Policy Analysis and Neoclassical Realism**

Within Neoclassical Realism there is no consensus regarding the domestic level. There are different takes on how and which domestic factors are of influence on the foreign policy of a nation (Lobell et al., 2009). This is where Foreign Policy Analysis comes in. FPA is a more structured approach in analyzing domestic factors that influence foreign policy decisions. Although the link between these two approaches has been made before, for instance by Kozub-Karkut (2019) and Hadfield-Amkhan (2010), FPA still dwells in the lesser recognized areas of international relations. However, just like the previously mentioned authors, FPA and NCR can be great additions to each other and deal with many flaws in both theories. FPA gives a well-structured approach to analyze specific cases of foreign policy outcomes but lacks a sound theoretical foundation and philosophical background. This means that FPA is a strong tool, but often lacks the more fundamental justification that most IR theories provide. Therefore, NCR is an important addition. The more abstract discussion on people's motivations, the importance of various variables and theoretical justification, provide a better foundation for this research.

Although they might complement each other in many ways, there are some key distinctions between NCR and FPA theory. For instance, they were not developed as parts of a larger theory. As addressed before, NCR has been developed in response to Neorealism, Classical Realism and Social Constructivism, while for FPA counts: "Firstly, open-ended problem formulation (one of the three criteria) is a very important characteristic of almost all FPA research that does not look for univariate explanations with one single dominant theory. FPA scholars are less engaged in theoretical debates and their primary purpose is not to defend the core postulates of a theory, but rather to focus on more useful empirical work." (Kozub-Karkut, 2019, p. 205) FPA has been largely developed separate from the 'grand IR theories' and gives no clear support for any of those theories. It does, however, include the proper methodological tools to structurally analyze foreign policy decisions, while NCR provides a deeper theoretical foundation as to why analyze foreign policy decision-making on these levels at all. According to Rosenau (1966), in order to analyze states better, we also need to look inside the state at the decision makers themselves and not just at a macro level. In other words, explore the middle ground between grand theories and the complexity of reality.

## **2.6. Neoclassical Realism and FPA on the European level**

Analyzing the European Union can be done in different ways. A crucial distinction in analyzing the EU is to see it as an actor, made up by components. An entity that can make decisions and define policy much like a state can. Some Realist scholars argue that the EU is not like a state and is nothing

more than the combination of foreign policy of the most powerful member states. For both a Neoclassical Realist approach and a Foreign Policy Analysis the way the EU is defined is important. NCR theory sees states as the most important actors in international relations and even though, unlike other Realist approaches, there are roles for international organizations, they are not the units of analysis. However, in this thesis the EU is, and therefore in applying FPA and NCR some justification is necessary.

White (2017) identifies two different ways to interpret the EU and analyze it. The institutionalist approach and the actor approach. Both these approaches clearly identify the debate set out before. In short, the institutionalist approach lines up best with the Realist and Liberal scholars who see the Union as an aggregate of state policies and defined by the structure of the system. The big problem with this approach is when the actions of actors cannot be defined by the system. The systemic Realist approach where the security dilemma defines the actions of states as elaborated on before, lacks an actor-based explanation. The same is true for the Liberal institutionalist approach. White argues that in analyzing European policy making an actor-based approach gives a deeper analytic understanding of any policy case. In other words, the EU fits the theoretical description and can be analyzed using the NCR and FPA approach; the following section will just do that.

### **3. Foreign Policy Analysis**

#### **3.1. Foreign policy analysis in theory**

Analyzing the foreign policy of a state, starts with defining what the subject of analysis is going to be. Foreign policy is a rather comprehensive term, encapsulating many different subjects. On the other hand, it is also rather easy to define. ‘Foreign’ means everything outside the borders of the sovereign state, while ‘policy’ can be seen as the overall output of the government apparatus. Combined then, foreign policy would be the overall output of the government regarding states or other entities outside the nation’s borders. Some remarks have to be added, however. Policy implies that all output is the result of specific and intentional actions, while in day-to-day reality not everything is intentional, nor planned. Secondly, and more important for this thesis specifically, is the notion of what ‘foreign’ exactly entails. An analysis of the European Union already raises this question. Nowadays, not all sovereignty lies with the member states of the European Union; there are limits to what they can and cannot decide. There are distinctions between what is decided at the EU level and what is decided by the member states, albeit that these distinctions are not always followed in practice. These issues will be addressed in a later chapter.

In light of this thesis, foreign policy will be limited to a single subject; this means that boundaries are rather easy to distinguish. Everything that is part of a country’s policy and that is directly related to the JCPAO, will be dealt with as foreign policy and therefore be considered as part of the decision-making process.

According to Hudson & Day (2019), modern FPA theory attempts to:

- Analyze international relations at an actor-based level;
- Build middle-range theory to link macro and micro level analysis;
- Pursue multi-causal explanations;
- Combine and utilize multiple disciplines of social science;
- Consider the process of foreign policy decision-making as important as the output.

Hudson and Day (2019) identify five levels of analysis in FPA theory. These various levels constitute the framework which is used in this thesis to analyze decision-making procedures in the EU. Using this structured approach will make sure that most bases are covered and that no major explanatory (f)actor is excluded from the analysis. The theory, as formulated by Hudson and Day, is a comprehensive accumulation of the major works in FPA over time and does not just represent their own views. As FPA has been developed and examined by many authors over numerous years, this forms a solid theoretical foundation for the analysis.

#### **3.2. Characteristics of leaders**

A key level of analysis where FPA tries to distinguish itself from the mainstream IR theories, is close attention for the leaders that make foreign policy decisions. The first main question is when do leaders matter? In the democracies that are analyzed, there is not a single person with absolute power; even though individual traits might have an effect, they are never all-deciding factors. An important factor related to the role of a leader is the regime type of a country (Hudson & Day, 2019).

Because the EU is a democratic institution, this thesis will only take the role of leaders in a democratic regime into account. It is obvious that autocratic regimes are more strongly influenced by

the characteristics of the leader when it comes to foreign policy decision making. In democracies, however, the effect of these characteristics should not be underestimated as well. According to many, in every regime type there is room for leadership influence; Donald Trump might be seen as a recent illustration (Hudson & Day, 2019). There are numerous characteristics of leaders that (can) influence the decision-making process. Much of the literature focuses on presidents or prime ministers, but the JCPOA was mainly negotiated under the supervision of the EU High Representative. This, however, mainly matters for the first couple of factors that research the role of a leader and much of the theory is still applicable as shown by Kaarbo & Hermann (1998).

The first factor of influence has already been addressed before; the influence of the type of regime on a leader's role is rather large. The second important factor is the leader's interest in foreign policy decision-making. This should also be there when it comes to the major players involved, since they are representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Another factor to consider is whether or not a crisis situation occurs. Leaders tend to become more involved and pay more attention during crisis situations. The fourth variable is whether or not information is scarce. High-level decision-making in a situation with a lack of information is more likely to involve the person in charge (Hudson & Day, 2019). According to Hermann (1984), the extent of diplomatic training and experience is another important criterium. Leaders with more training tend to have a different way of dealing with advisors, really taking charge instead of being guided. The sixth factor discussed by Hudson & Day (2019) is the expertise regarding a particular region of the world where the policy applies to. If the person in charge has affinity with the specific country or topic, he or she is more likely to adapt the final variable. This refers to hands-on leadership; the extent of decision-making power that the person in charge delegates to his or her staff is of great importance to how much influence the decision maker will have had on the decision.

All these factors influence the role a leader will take and how large the influence of that person will be. Through analyzing these factors, more insight in the decision-making process of institutions can be reached. When leadership style and characteristics are crucial in the implementation of foreign policy, the role of institutions is usually limited.

### **3.3. Group decision-making and bureaucratic processes**

Most important decisions in foreign policy are not made by just a single leader. Especially in democracies, there are numerous people involved before a final result is reached. Therefore, it is important to understand how group dynamics can influence decision making. A key characteristic of these groups is that they are rather limited in size (Hudson & Day, 2019). Many aspects of leaders influence the dynamics and composition of a group, one key aspect being experience. More experienced leaders enable better flows of information and are less prone to seek advice from people who tend to agree with them (Saunders, 2017). According to Hermann & Hermann (1989), the division of power and positions in a group is of major importance to the stance people will take in regards to the political leader, the president or prime minister. Representatives from specific organizations – for instance, intelligence services or the agricultural sector – tend to act more like representatives of their specific roles than neutral advisors; loyal employees of the leader also are more likely to choose loyalty over neutrality. Therefore, the people in the group who are able to contribute in a neutral way, are usually the most influential persons in a group setting. Other research into the dynamics of group decision making has been done by Janis. Coining the term 'groupthink' (Janis, 1972), he describes the factors that contribute to bad group decision making even though the members of the group are experts in themselves and should be able to strengthen each other. In his work, Janis addresses different mechanisms that affect the outcome of these processes. Analyzing all these mechanisms in a case as recent as the JCPOA is near to impossible; therefore, although Janis' theory will be taken into account in the analysis, the focus will be on the bureaucratic process. In

short, the leadership characteristics matter for the importance of the decision-making process of the group. More experienced leaders are less likely to fall for groupthink symptoms and are more likely to make good decisions.

An important side-note to make here is that the JCPOA will not be addressed as a crisis situation. Although the seriousness and consequences of these negotiations and even more so the potential failure of these negotiations are certainly not underestimated, there was no direct crisis situation that needed to be handled in a matter of days. This is an important issue in light of the theoretical approach to this case. Hudson and Day (2019) state that in non-crisis situations other group dynamics prevail; the position of agencies and individuals becomes easier to predict since they usually act as representatives of their agencies.

The bureaucratic process is a second step in the group-decision making process. Organizations in a bureaucracy facilitate cooperation between people with diverging specialties and from different disciplines. In complicated negotiations like the JCPOA, there was some interesting overlap in jurisdiction between the EU delegates on the one hand and the delegations of the involved European nations – France, the United Kingdom and Germany – on the other. This specific overlap will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter. The theory concerning bureaucratic organizations is a good way to discuss this precarious European balancing act and analyze the role of the various European interest groups in the negotiations.

Size matters, and although this sounds simple, quite a lot of research has shown that the sheer size of an organization increases its bargaining power and influence (Hudson & Day, 2019; Frooman, 1999; Pajunen, 2006). How size is determined, is a different issue and by no means easy. Money does not equal influence; a larger budget does not always mean more employees. And, size is definitely not everything that matters in how important various sections are within an institution like the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). As Pajunen (2006) argues, the amount of responsibilities and power does not only correspond with size, it is also strongly connected to autonomy. The higher the rank of government organization, the higher the level of autonomy, but inside an organization there is almost always a hierarchy.

A more structured approach to analyzing the influence of different groups will be explored in the domestic politics domain.

### **3.4. Domestic politics**

In many cases, the influence of domestic politics on foreign policy decision making is obvious. Climate change protests and American protests against the Vietnam war are just some examples of international policies becoming domestic issues. Domestic politics in terms of the European Union, however, differs slightly from the usual analysis of the influence of domestic policy (more on this in the next chapter). Hill (2003) notes that the majority of the electorate is not interested in foreign security policy in times of peace. Issues like migration and economics are usually a lot more important for voters. In crisis situations this changes, however, as a president or prime minister can get a lot of praise (or critique) for handling such a situation. During such times, public opinion is more affected than in non-crisis situations when public opinion and interest is very limited (Foyle, 2017).

#### **3.4.1. Domestic Actors**

Even though it can be hard to prove the relationship between domestic actors and foreign policy decision making, it is unrealistic to assume that for example public opinion and media have no effect on foreign policy decisions. Baum & Potter (2015) show that even though the relationship is not easy

to predict, in some cases there is a strong correlation between media attention and decision-making. Knecht & Weatherford (2006), as well as others, show different kind of ties between domestic actors and foreign policy decisions. On the international stage these actors create a two-level game, as described by Putnam (1988). Negotiators or high-ranking officials are usually playing 'the game' of international politics on two levels: the international level with their direct counterparts from other countries and the domestic level where they have to face the backlash or support for their decisions. In negotiations like the JCPOA, these domestic factors also have an effect on the negotiations. Hudson and Day (2019) have compiled a list of factors that have shown to be an influence, although it does not mean that all these factors always, in all cases have an influence. The relationship between these factors and European policy will be analyzed later.

Domestic actors that can potentially influence foreign policy decision making are:

**The three branches of government** (executive, legislative and judicial) are the first and most important influence on policy. The executive branch of government is the branch that not only implements the foreign policy, but usually also develops most of it. The legislative branch is generally consulted and steers the policy as much as it can, but it is usually not in control of it. It does, however, often have the power to ratify important treaties and trade deals. The effect of the judicial branch is limited to ensuring that no treaty will break existing laws and that, after a treaty has passed, the government lives up to the consequences.

**Political factions** have an influence on the executive branch, mainly in case they belong to the same parties as the government, or, in the case of the EU, the European Commission (Bolleyer, 2011). Cohen (2003) shows that in some cases group influence of political parties and factions even outweighs political ideology. More often than not high-ranking members of these parties know each other personally and have shared ideas, which strengthens their influence. Most party members also have a thorough knowledge of the political process, which makes their efforts more to the point and therefore usually more effective (Schmidt, 1996).

**Business and lobby coalitions** constitute important actors in domestic politics. According to the European Parliament, around 2,600 interest groups have a permanent office in Brussels. This number is already large in itself, but does not include groupings that exert influence but are not based in Brussels, nor organizations that represent multiple clients (Lehmann, 2003). Salamon & Siegfried (1977) have shown a strong link between corporate influence and tax cuts in the United States. They also find that the bigger the firms, the larger their influence. Many scholars have time and time again illustrated that there are strong connections between business interests and policy outcomes. To ensure more clarity in the analysis, the same variables will be analyzed when it comes to lobby influences as the other domestic factors.

**Think tanks** have a long history of close connections to foreign policy decision making; the first institutions in this field were specifically created to advice national governments on various policy subjects (Abelson, 2014). A think tank is rather hard to define, as they have grown in number but also greatly vary as far as the purpose and the way they are set are concerned. Generally, think tanks are independent non-profit organizations that analyze and advice on public policy. Nowadays the line between think tanks and lobby organizations is thin, as many think tanks have their own political agendas and advocate these, rather than just giving policy advice. US think tanks are renowned for their political agendas (Abelson, 2014). The influence of think tanks will be determined and analyzed with the help of the same factors as the lobby groups and other domestic actors.

**Media** is another group which influence on policy seems obvious. Political leaders frequently respond directly to media messages. The real influence of the media is hard to determine; political leaders are unlikely to admit that they directly follow the media; they do, however, like to claim that they listen to the people who are in a way represented by the media. The volume of recent scholarly work on the



influence of the media on public and foreign policy is massive. Some very influential research on the influence of media on foreign policy decision making has been conducted by Robinson (2001). He argues that media can have a strong influence on foreign policy and he tries to explain the links by comparing various outlets. On the other hand, Yordinava (2012) states that, in general, the direct influence of media on international politics is rather limited; however, Robinson (2000) notes that this is only the case when the political discourse is already set. When there is still room for debate, the media can play an important role in decision-making.

**Unions** are mainly concerned with national politics as they serve the interests of their members; hardly any trade union has an international membership. In many European countries trade unions do have a significant influence on policy, however (Avdagic, 2005). Whenever an international policy matter has a link to a national issue a trade union is interested in, it might attempt to influence policy. Nevertheless, research on direct influence of trade unions on foreign policy is scarce.

**Subnational governments** can be supportive of a national government, but might also be an obstacle for the implementation of policies. It primarily depends on the parties in government on the national level (Bolleyer, 2011). The European Parliament is mostly made up of representatives from ‘party families’ who can influence the policies of the European Commission and the European External Action Service (Wisniewski, 2013). Subnational governments as such are not that relevant from a European perspective though.

### 3.4.2. Variables of analysis

The first variable that should apply to these actors, is whether or not they are mobilized (Hudson & Day, 2019). There are many domestic actors – listed above – that might or might not have an influence one way or another, but if they are not mobilized or active concerning the issue under investigation, their influence is either not present or it is so direct it is basically impossible to measure. In other words, *mobilization* is the first threshold variable. Next, the characteristics of actors that show signs of mobilization can be analyzed. Hudson and Day list several domestic factors that are not considered in this research, because they are not mobilized. The characteristics that are used, are *proximity*, *cohesiveness*, *size* and *viewpoint*. (They also add activity, but since this is rather similar to the criterium of mobilization, it does not really serve a purpose in this analysis.) These four variables are all scaling variables, meaning that they are not just ‘on’ or ‘off’, but rather can be higher and lower values in relation to the various domestic factors. In the analysis they will all be rated with either ++ for a great influence, a + for significant influence, a - for insignificant influence and - - for actors that are unlikely to have had any influence. The viewpoint variable will analyze the strength of support or opposition. A more elaborate discussion of the exact content of these variables is included in the analytic part of this thesis when they are applied.

**Proximity** to the decision-making process is the first variable that is used to analyze influence on foreign policy decision making. Proximity can be seen as access to the process or actors involved. For example, direct advisors have a very close proximity while most scholars usually have a smaller or lower proximity. A closer proximity gives the opportunity to directly exert influence instead of indirectly.

**Cohesiveness** of the actors is the second variable that can influence foreign policy decision making. If the actor is just one individual, the cohesiveness is very large; protest movements like the recent Black Lives Matter protests can be seen as less cohesive, since even though the protesters have a clear common spark, they most likely do not all have the exact same point of view. The more cohesive an actor is, the more direct influence this actor can exert. Fragmentation of actors usually leads to a weaker voice and less strong decision-making (Hagan, 2017).

**Size** has been noted before as an important factor for group influence on foreign policy decision making, but it is also an important factor in analyzing domestic actors. In democracies every individual's vote counts the same, which means that a large group of people generally matters more to decision-makers than just single individuals. This also implies that the larger the group, the larger the influence. Size can also come with money, a less direct way to influence policy but a powerful incentive nonetheless (Kirshner, 2003). In other words, size is a combination of finances and support, but since they usually correlate very strongly they form a single variable.

**Viewpoint** or stance of an actor, finally, matters quite a lot. If actors fully agree with the decision being made, it is unlikely they initiate activities – except, perhaps, from speaking out in favor. The more domestic actors disagree, the stronger their opposition becomes. Minor disagreements might not be a cause for action, but strong ones can result in fierce domestic opposition. It should be noted that viewpoints can vary within a single actor; usually the more cohesive actors have clearer points of view regarding their interests.

### **3.5. Shared culture and identity**

The final theoretical perspective to come to a comprehensive analysis is the cultural perspective. Shared culture and identity are factors that have gained much attention over the recent years. Where at the end of the twentieth century Realism and other individualistic theories still reigned supreme, beginning in the late 1990s Wendt and his Social Constructivist theory began influencing the academic debate. As said, central in this theory is a focus on culture, instead of a focus on the individual or institutions. For an all-encompassing analysis, culture should also be addressed in analyzing decision-making – even more so in the case of the European Union, since many argue that a shared identity is fundamental to the Union. According to Hudson & Day (2019, p. 123), “the role of culture is both intuitive as well as elusive”; most scholars intuitively understand that culture plays a role in international relations and decision-making, but at the same time that role is hard to identify.

Although FPA scholars have struggled with conceptualizing the role of culture and national identity, there are some easy questions to start with.

The first one is: who are we? In reference to national identity, Gyngell (2017) states that how people see themselves is mirrored in how they want their country to act on an international level. It has to be pointed out that obviously not every citizen of a country would answer the question regarding national identity the same way; nations are diverse and so are people (Hudson & Day, 2019). In most nations, there are, however, generally accepted ideas about what it means to be, for example, American, Dutch or Italian. The question, ‘who are we?’, is not only important to the people, it is also important to the state itself (Subotic, 2011). When nations are culturally connected, problems in negotiations can be easier to overcome than when cultures are vastly different (Brett, 2000). This means that in the context of the JCPOA, cultural ties could have played a role in the European decision-making process.

#### **3.5.1. Operationalization of culture**

The notions of culture and national identity are hard to operationalize and measure. First of all, because there is no consensus on the definitions. As far as the notion of culture is concerned, Hofstede (1980) has developed a definition of culture and a way to measure and compare identity between countries. His definition of culture is a rather broad one, stating that culture is the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group from another (Hofstede, 1980). Identity and culture are strongly connected in international relations, both being concepts that describe the phenomenon stated before. For measuring this national culture, Hofstede created five dimensions;

nations score on these dimensions and the scores can be used to compare cultures of countries. By doing so, a cross-country comparison of the cultures of EU member states can be made, as well as of Iran. It allows for a fair comparison and analysis of cultural (dis)similarities.

### **3.5.2. Cultural dimensions**

The first dimension to analyze culture is labeled *Power Distance*. This measures the extent of acceptance of unequal power distribution; when countries score high on this dimension, the people in general have a high acceptance of inequality in society. This relates to social inequality. The second dimension, *Uncertainty Avoidance*, is defined by “the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations, and have created beliefs and institutions that try and avoid these” (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, p. 420). This also includes the societal issue on how a state deals with conflict and vital decisions regarding security. Both these variables are linear scores from high to low. The third dimension is labelled *Individualism versus Collectivism* and identifies how individualistic a society is by looking at how people expect to look after themselves. Is this focused on themselves and direct family only, then the society is individualistic; but when it extends to their fellow citizens, then the society is collectivist. The fourth label, *Masculinity versus Femininity*, defines which values a society deems important. These can be masculine values like success and money, whereas femininity is linked to caring for others and quality of life. This dimension is related to how people see gender roles in society and the effect it has on people’s identity. The final dimension is *Long Term Orientation*. This measures how much people are weighing long-term happiness versus short-term satisfaction. (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Analyzing the score for the different countries involved in the negotiations of the JCPOA will allow for a sensible judgement on their cultural ties. Later on, the Hofstede team did add another cultural dimension, *Indulgence*, but this will not be taken into account because not enough peer reviewed literature has valued this addition for it to be widely recognized as a separate dimension, even though it might become one in the future.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Justification of qualitative method**

To answer the research question several steps have to be taken. The first is to create a research design, including a valid approach to gather the information needed and also make sure this information actually answers the research question. The first step in creating a strong research design is the qualitative approach for this thesis. Since we are examining a single case and trying to explain the outcome of this case, N is one – with N being the number of research subjects. This means that a quantitative approach is not possible, since it would need a larger N. Gerring (2006) specifies what characteristics are necessary for a good case study design. The first specification is what kind of research question is being considered. In this case there is no real hypothesis because the goal of this thesis is to add to a developing theoretical field. Therefore, the goal is explaining the outcome of a case and theory building. This is best done with in-depth research into a single case to develop specific theories (Gerring, 2006, p. 39). When it comes to foreign policy decision making of the European Union, the negotiations of the JCPOA are a direct example of conflicting attitudes between the United States and the European Union. There are of course other cases in history that could describe the decision-making process of the European Union, but the JCPOA negotiations are recent and of major importance (Razaei, 2019). This makes the JCPOA negotiations a strong case study to research – but to make sure it does more than just explain a single outcome, the external validity needs to be justified. Gerring (2006) notes that with single case studies the external validity can sometimes be difficult to define. In this case the JCPOA decision-making process is not just aimed at finding more information about the general process of the European Union and how important international security issues are dealt with. It also focusses on the FPA and NCR theories as mentioned before and applies the theoretical framework set out by many scholars. So, on the one side the case study attempts to shed light on the decision-making process of the EU while at the same time trying to explore the practical side of FPA and NCR.

### **4.2. Process-tracing approach**

The goal of this case study is to find causal connections – or at least plausible causal connections – between factors of influence and the outcome. The outcome in this case refers to the JCPOA. As set out in the previous chapter, FPA in its development has provided several theoretical influences. The process-tracing approach allows for a structural analysis of the theory in practice. Beach & Pederson (2019) formulated this approach more in-depth. They state that there are three main forms of process tracing; the one used in this thesis is the so-called explaining-outcome process-tracing method. This means that in this thesis a specific case will be researched with a puzzling outcome. The JCPOA negotiations have a puzzling outcome in light of the recent withdrawal by the United States only, although the European Union, as stated before, usually tends to follow the U.S. in security issues. More importantly, the JCPOA is an outcome and an achievement in and of itself because of the massive bridges that had to be crossed between the participating states. This makes it interesting to figure out what led to the JCPOA in the first place and trace the specific steps in the process that led to the outcome. Process-tracing is an approach well-fit for this purpose.

Beach & Pederson (2019) argue that two main paths can be chosen to reach an explanation for the outcome, the inductive and the deductive paths. This thesis will combine both paths in a specific way. The theoretical approach sets the boundaries of what will be considered as possible influences. This means that the complete overview of FPA theory set out before is the limit of what factors will and

which will not be considered as possible influences. The following, main analysis of the thesis will be inductive, gathering information about the case itself and trying to find out whether or not the empirical facts of the case match the theoretical framework.

Process-tracing allows for various kinds of data collection since case study research and causal mechanisms are impossible to fully generalize with one method only. For a broad research into European decision-making like this case study, the main data collection is done through literature review. Making use of secondary sources with proven reliability of peer reviewed papers will allow for more viable data than most other forms of secondary data collection or content analysis.

#### **4.3. Operationalization and data collection**

So as to answer the research question as specific as possible, several steps have to be taken to cover various possibilities. Operationalization and data collection are rather difficult in such a broad research. In FPA theory there are clear distinctions between the various sub-fields of analysis. There are multiple (f)actors that play a role in the decision-making process. These factors will be analyzed separately and the evidence will be weighed and compared later on in this thesis. The major factors in FPA theory that define foreign policy decision-making are the characteristics of a leader, the structure of the decision-making system, domestic actors and cultural influences. Through the years, these various dimensions have shown to have influence on all levels of international decision-making (Hudson & Day, 2019).

FPA theory might be a more structured approach for case studies than NCR, it nevertheless has some methodological weakness. Many analyses do not go in-depth in empirical studies and most that do rely on interviews as their main method of data. This data is very hard to gather, however, given that the recent negotiations on the JCPOA were held between high-level diplomats. Access for interviews is therefore rather hard to acquire. This does not mean, however, that FPA therefore is useless as a methodological approach. For every factor analyzed, data has to be gathered separately and in a different way.

For the leadership analysis, various sources and interviews are available that shed a good light on Mogherini's professional personality. Combined with background information this enables a leadership analysis. For the structure of the decision-making process sources are rather easy to access. Even though the European institutions change, they have been studied thoroughly. This means that to gather information about the leadership qualities of Mogherini the factors as set out in FPA theory that form a strong leader will be assessed. In process-tracing the causal pathways can be very distinct. In this thesis several causal connections are analyzed according to the FPA theory. The effect of a leader on the decision-making process is inherently linked to the system a leader operates in. That is why the bureaucratic system will be considered in the same section. In methodological terms this means that the system of the decision-making process decides what kind of effect a leader can have on the process. As argued previously in the theoretical discussion, democratic institutions change possible effect of the characteristics of a leader. In process-tracing terms the causal connection between the characteristics of the leader and the outcome of the negotiations will be analyzed.

The domestic actors are harder to identify. First of all, the data is harder to gather since direct evidence of most factors is difficult to trace. A closer look a general influence will be able to shed some light on their influence in the process of the JCPOA decision-making. One major filter in which domestic actors are taken into consideration in the analysis is their mobilization. The actors that theoretically can have an influence are not always present and in the case of the JCPOA some are mobilized while others are not. This thesis will not deal with all non-mobilized actors since there are so many, but instead will analyze the ones that are, by using the theoretical background to identify them and literature to identify a connection with the decision-making process. The exact influence of

these actors is dependent on their views; if they favored the outcome of the negotiations they probably pushed for them to succeed, while opponents are likely to try to play the role of spoiler. In the end it is difficult to identify exactly what the effect of the various actors has been, since direct access to the parties is, as stated before, hard to get. More specifics on the operationalization of this analytical section will be discussed in the next chapter in which the indirect evidence will be discussed and valued.

Finally, the cultural analysis is hardly present in most notable case studies that rely on FPA theory. Luckily, however, in sociology there has been a lot of comparative research into culture. Even though it still is very hard to exactly define and analyze the notion of culture, some strong approaches have been developed, for instance Hofstede's cultural analysis (Hofstede, 1982). This approach will therefore be used to analyze the cultural differences and similarities. In general, both the cultural analysis and the analysis of the domestic factors have connections that are hard to exactly define. According to the theory, many dimensions and elements can have an influence – if present, it is likely that they have had influence, although it might not give conclusive evidence. There is however, as illustrated in the previous chapter, quite some evidence that cultures that share common values have an easier time negotiating.

#### **4.4. Reflection on methodology**

It has to be noted that, since this is a single case study, the external validity might be a weak point as such. Even though the decision-making process within the European union does not change a lot within a short period of time, there are obviously power shifts over longer stretches of time. Therefore, lasting conclusions about European decision-making are hard to draw in any case, even if it concerned many cases over a longer period of time. The process-tracing method does, however, give good insights in the specific actors and influences that have had an effect on this process, which makes sure that the internal validity is strong. On top of this, it also helps in constructing a stronger practical implementation for the neoclassical approach as well as the foreign policy analytic approach and shows what these theories can add when choosing (f)actors to analyze in processes like this.

As said, in general, both the cultural analysis and the analysis of the domestic factors have connections that are hard to exactly define. According to the theory many dimensions and elements can have an impact and, if present, it is likely that they have had some kind of influence. Once more, I am aware that this might not offer concluding evidence. More research on the separate areas, especially interviews with direct access can give more insight in this issue.

## **5. Analysis of EU decision-making**

### **5.1. Introduction to EU foreign policy institutions**

As of July 2020, the European Union includes 27 member states and governs around 447 million citizens. Over the past years various treaties have shaped the way in which European governance is taking place. This process of many treaties and negotiations started with the Dunkirk Treaty back in 1947 has created more interconnection between the member states (White, 2017). Gaining power over more areas of public policy and facilitating more international connectivity, the EU has become more than just a vessel for cooperation. Its roots as a trade union are still there, but since new challenges arose in the world, cooperation in areas like immigration and security became almost a necessity (Engelbrekt et al., 2020). This growth of jurisdiction has not always taken place without a struggle and recently the United Kingdom has left the Union after a referendum vote by its citizens. There has also been some internal strife with leaders like the Hungarian Prime Minister Órban or the Polish nationalist party. Both have implemented reforms that, according to the European Commission, have negatively affected their democratic legitimacy. Gradually, however, more and more institutions for cooperation were created (Engelbrekt et al., 2020).

The European Council of ministers is one of the most important institutions when it comes to the European Union, although it is not officially part of the Union. The Council hosts meetings of the member states and sets the general direction for European decision making (White, 2017). This is more a combination of several councils consisting of the ministers of member states. Most day-to-day decisions on common policies are agreed upon in the Council of Ministers. The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) is important for this thesis and therefore elaborated upon in more detail later on. All Councils of Ministers have a rotating presidency, chairing every council meeting on every subject for six months. Another very important institution in the EU is the European Commission, the central institution in the European policy process (White, 2017). The Commission is responsible for most of the legislation proposed to the European Parliament (EP) and also for implementing this legislation. The European External Action Service (EEAS) falls under the jurisdiction of the Commission as well.

The specific institutions most important for this analysis are the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Foreign Affairs Council. Both are chaired by the High Representative (HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Vice-President of the European Commission. The HR at this point in time is Josep Borrell, but during the JCPOA negotiations the position was held by Federica Mogherini. The EEAS and the FAC constitute the foreign policy ‘department’ of the EU and in that respect have a large role in the foreign policy of the member states as well. Being the chairman of both the FAC and the EEAS gives the HR/VP significant power.

To some extent, the EEAS can be seen as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hosting the diplomatic service of the European Union. It is a relatively new institution, created in its current form only in 2010. The EEAS is a merger of the external relations departments of both the Commission and the European Parliament. The EEAS has its own staff and independent budget (Gatti, 2016). The FAC, on the other hand, brings together all the (vice-) ministers of the member states concerning numerous foreign affairs topics. Who takes part, depends on the subject discussed and the importance of the issue, but generally these are the ministers of foreign affairs of the member states (Wouters, 2004). In general, the FAC is more a forum for cooperation and finding consensus between the member states, while the EEAS implements foreign policy it is mainly determined by the FAC (Gatti, 2016). The interconnection between the different institutions deciding on European foreign policy will be

considered more closely when analyzing the influence of the bureaucratic process on decision making.

## **5.2. European foreign policy**

Analyzing foreign policy decision making in the EU is not the same as analyzing the national decision making. Nations are distinct actors and usually have full sovereignty over the FPDM. The EU is different in many respects; in some sense it is more like an international organization than a nation, while regarding other aspects the EU can make nation-like decisions. White (2017) argues that the EU is unlike any other entity in international relations. A collective cooperation between states, organized by a supranational organization with some clear power outlines but some rather vague ones as well. As a form of collective cooperation between states, the EU always tries to balance the common interests of the member states with the individual interests of its members. “The EU’s foreign policy identity is in formation. The overall weakness of European identity (compared with national identities) combined with the complexity of the EU’s multi-level decision-making structures makes a coordinated foreign policy approach difficult.” (DeBardeleben, 2012, p. 217) As argued by DeBardeleben, European foreign policy (EFP) is still in the process of being shaped. This is illustrated by the rather recent creation of the EEAS and other institutions. This means that the interaction between the member states and the EU is also in a process of changing over time. Where European foreign policy for most of its history used to be centered around the member states, more recently the European Commission, FAC and EEAS have gained authority on various issues that are now outside the control of individual states. This process is also referred to as the Europeanization of foreign policy (Tonra, 2000). Wong & Hill (2010) have made an in-depth analysis of the connection between the European foreign policy and the foreign policies of its member states and show that there is a strong connection between both. There are some areas in which the European Commission and other EU bodies have executive power. The distinctions are not strict in the sense that member states can no longer make autonomous decisions – in general, however, there are separations between EU policy and nations’ policies.

## **5.3. Negotiations of the JPOA and the JCPOA**

The first explorative negotiations between Iran and the security council already started in 2003, but did not really get off the ground until the election of Rouhani. As a more moderate leader he was open to talks with the west where his predecessors had a more hostile stance to the west (Sherman 2018). In February 2014 the first rounds of the official negotiations with the final participants took place (Fitzpatrick 2015). These negotiations were still about the framework deal called the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA). The European leader of these negotiations was Ashton the predecessor of Mogherini who will be the subject of analysis in this thesis. These negotiations were of great importance to the final deal but not very important to the European decision-making process yet. The first rounds and years of negotiating were just about the content of the deal in very broad lines (Sherman 2018). Most of the actual deal and decision-making around it, was done in the last 20 months of the negotiations. Between the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015 there was intense negotiations going on between all parties. Many tri-lateral talks between the EU, Iran and the U.S. took place as well (Ibid. 2018). Finally, the deal was presented to the world in July of 2015. The election of Donald Trump, who was very critical of the deal, did not end up in US withdrawal until 2018 (Motamedi 2020).

The JCPOA is an extensive agreement on the ban of nuclear weapons development in Iran. Sherman (2018) states that it could even be used as a framework deal for nuclear negotiations with North-Korea and other nations that might start to develop nuclear weapons. In short; it limits the enrichment



of uranium to levels that cannot be weaponized and only be used for energy supply and reduces the stockpile of uranium by 97% (Sanmore et al. 2015). The deal would ban these activities over a period of 10 years and let inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the country for checks whenever they felt it was necessary. This would ensure compliance with the deal, if Iran would not comply with the deal sanctions could be put back in place (Ibid. 2015). More on what factors influence the negotiations from the EU side will be analyzed in the following sections.

## **5.4. Domestic factors of influence**

The first major factor of influence on foreign policy decision making the EU is the role of domestic actors. The theoretical basis for how these actors influence policy, has been laid out in a previous section and the possible actors have been listed into three broad categories for this analysis. The European government influence groups the three branches of government together with political factions and subnational governments, mainly because government in the EU works somewhat different than for an ‘ordinary country’. In the section on government, the various governmental institutions described previously will be analyzed on four variables: proximity, cohesiveness, size, and viewpoint. In the second section the interest groups are analyzed with the same approach, with business and lobby coalitions being the key groups of this analysis. The final section will analyze the influence of media and other external factors in society. Because there are numerous think tanks with various diverging opinions, analyzing them as a group would be chaotic and offer little analytic value. Various sources claim that a big influence on the process in the United States came from Israeli think tanks (Saltzman, 2017; Entous, 2015).

“The Iran nuclear issue has been the most significant regional security challenge that Israel had to grapple with in recent times. Israel held that the continued growth of the Iranian nuclear capabilities – from August 2002 when the existence of the Natanz enrichment plant was revealed by an Iranian opposition group to November 2013 – when the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) was negotiated, posed not only a threat to regional peace and stability but also was an existential threat.” (Rajiv, 2016, p. 47).

This statement clearly shows the crucial interest of Israel in the negotiations of the JCPOA and how strongly they it opposed them. For that reason, this will be considered in the European foreign policy decision making process as well.

### **5.4.1. European government influence**

As stated previously, the EU is a combination of many institutions – it can be hard to distinguish them from each other when it comes to policy autonomy, especially when it comes to foreign affairs since there are overlaps and split opinions. There are, however, two major institutions that were actually mobilized to the extent of having a measurable effect on the negotiations. The European Parliament (EP) has also spoken out in favor of the JCPOA several times and therefore will also be addressed, although it lacks the same administrative power that the other institutions have. The Commission is not analyzed separately, since the EEAS is directly linked to it and therefore will be the actual unit of analysis of the Commission.

#### **EEAS**

The *Proximity* score of the EEAS is very high.

“The EU team, led by the High Representative, was at the centre of all these meetings [JCPOA negotiations]. Federica Mogherini chaired the main Foreign Ministers meetings, while Deputy Secretary General of EEAS Helga Schmidt led talks between the political directors. Two EEAS Senior Advisors coordinated technical discussions at expert level.” (Jessen, 2017, p. 33)

Jessen clearly states that the EEAS was directly involved, even chairing the meetings.

The *Cohesiveness* score of the EEAS is also high. As an institution led by a single leader who is able to appoint her deputies and assistants, the EEAS is a very cohesive organization (Furness, 2012). Its representatives do not have to worry about pleasing different member states, unlike the FAC, since they are direct employees of the EEAS and therefore fall under the authority of the European Commission.

The *Size* score of the EEAS is not as high as the previous variables. For a foreign affairs apparatus the EEAS is rather small, in particular in comparison to many a member states foreign affairs department. Germany, for instance, spends 5.45 billion euros and has an 8.000+ staff (Karremans, 2020). The EEAS has a staff of about 4.000 employees and a budget of 678 million euros (EEAS Annual Activity Report, 2020). Therefore, in comparison to the (larger) member states, the EEAS is not a large organization. However, compared to other factors of influence on the decision-making process, the EEAS can be called a rather large actor.

The *Viewpoint* score of the EEAS is also a 10. The EEAS fully agreed with the terms of the agreement and entirely supported the outcome on paper and probably did as well in practice because the EU has always defended the accord.

Combining all these variables we can see that the EEAS was one of the major factors in the decision-making process regarding the JCPOA. Therefore, the EEAS will be awarded a ++ score to show how much influence it had.

## **FAC**

The *Proximity* score of the FAC is very high. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, the United Kingdom and Germany, all having a seat in the FAC, were directly involved in the negotiations. Furthermore, Federica Mogherini chaired the FAC meetings and took part in the negotiations as well. Without the consent of the FAC, the HR/VP cannot make any major decisions (Morillas, 2020). This means these Ministers of Foreign Affairs are usually quite close to the foreign policy decision making, but in the case of the JCPOA they were directly involved.

The *Cohesiveness* score is trickier to determine. In many press conferences the FAC ministers that took part gave the impression of being very cohesive in their points of view, but a closer look at the developments over time showed that member states had different views going into the negotiations. France wanted strong sanctions towards Iran and joined forces with the United States, while Germany was in favor of a more cautious approach, criticizing the hardline approach (Jessen, 2017). This indicates that, at least at the start of the negotiations, the views of the European Council were not really coherent. This case is similar to many other cases in the FAC; throughout history, the Council has rarely been united on any subject, because of the many different interests at play (Wouters, 2004). Eventually, however, the Council did agree on the final negotiations; according to Jessen (2017), the main obstacles were thrown in by the United States, not the EU.

The *Size* score of the FAC is hard to determine, because what exactly is the FAC in terms of size? Since it consists of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the EU member states, one might argue that they represent the combined departments of Foreign Affairs of all member states. However, this does

not mean that they also get to decide on the budget of their department, nor that they have unlimited access to that budget. The number of people working directly for the FAC is also insignificant. However, since the FAC ministers are the most direct representatives of the member states and have significant influence over any foreign policy decision in the EU, they will be seen as the direct voice of the member countries.

The *Viewpoint* is also clear here. Even if the Council would have had disagreements with the terms going into the negotiations, they did not voice strong objections during the negotiations and have always supported the terms of the JCPOA, even when the Trump administration stated the U.S. was going to pull out of the agreement. This shows that the Council was in agreement.

Analyzing the variables for the FAC shows that the FAC also had a massive influence on the process. As the main decision-making body of the EU when it comes to foreign affairs it is in line with the expectation that the score will also be a ++.

## EP

The *Proximity* score of the European Parliament is higher than one might expect at a first glance. The EP includes various delegations and committees that directly influence foreign policy. The Parliament does, however, lack any real power as compared to the FAC and the EEAS (Zanon, 2005). It does not decide on or implement the most important foreign policy issues. Therefore, members of parliament lack direct access to the negotiations, even though they have close ties with the Iranian parliament. In recent years the HR/VP and other Commission representatives have repeatedly voiced the opinion that the EP has to be updated with the state of the negotiations – although it is not evident that this also happened during the JCPOA agreement, it is most likely it did take place (Anglmayer & Scherrer 2020).

*Cohesiveness* is usually pretty low in a democratically elected parliament, let alone in one that is made up of political parties from 27 different countries. In the EP there are seven political groups. This means that the range of views is often very wide and people from all kinds of parties are represented. In other words, the cohesiveness is low – although a majority supports the Iran deal, which will be discussed in the variable on viewpoint.

The *Size* score of the EP is limited, because even though it has a substantial budget (€1.8 billion) most of this is spent in salaries and day-to-day running costs. This is somehow comparable to the EEAS, but the latter is fully specialized in foreign policy decision making, whereas the EP is a much broader institution. The foreign affairs committee only consists of 71 members and just over 100 administrative employees (Zanon, 2005).

The *Viewpoint* score of the EP is the only significant factor. Many members of the EP as well as the President have come forward to speak out in favor of the deal after it was presented. In general, the EP agrees with the terms of the deal and since a majority is enough to speak for the parliament as a whole.

The European Parliament did not have a significant influence on the decision-making process regarding the JCPOA. The EP could have had some minor influence, but it is hard to measure and therefore validate. Therefore, the European Parliament will be assessed as an insignificant influence with a – score.

### 5.4.2. Interest group influence

Since Brussels is home to the second largest number of lobby groups and public affairs offices in the world, it is likely that some of these interest groups have had an influence – or at least were mobilized – in the JCPOA agreement. The agreement includes the lifting of many sanctions by the EU and the U.S., in particular regarding oil trade and other economic activities. This obviously concerns many interest groups and a variety of business lobbies. Especially European firms showed interest in the large Iranian market (Ewing & Reed, 2018). It is impossible to analyze all of these and even hard to find evidence concerning the biggest ones. Lobby activities have always been notoriously hard to research and analyze. They are, however, important in the decision-making process and any evidence of their involvement contributes a great deal to a better understanding of European foreign policy decisions. Ewing & Reed (2018), Bayoumy & Love (2018) and Cimino-Isaacs & Katzman (2017) all show that main industries and lobby activities that are active in Iran because of the JCPOA, are related to oil and gas and transport. The transport sector in particular proved impossible to analyze in any sensible way. There is not enough information available concerning their lobby activities in general, since it is such a broad group. There is also hardly any public information about their activities in the EU regarding the JCPOA negotiations.

#### Oil and gas industry

The *Proximity* score is rather high. According to a recent study by various NGOs, the two hundred lobbyists employed by the five largest companies in the industry have had more than one meeting a week with high-ranking Commission officials (Laville, 2019). Combined with a \$250 million budget over the past ten years, this means that these companies have a lot of access to EU legislation. This does not necessarily mean that they had access to and influence on the JCPOA negotiations as well, but given the amount of money involved they had direct interests regarding the economic opportunities. Total signed a development deal of over \$4.7 billion (Cimino-Isaacs & Katzman, 2017). None of these companies had direct access to the negotiations, however, so their impact was most likely indirect.

The *Cohesiveness* score of the oil companies is hard to judge. At a first glance they have very similar objectives and are mainly driven by profit. All five companies named in the report are, however, different in how they achieve this. Not every player will have the same interest in developing their business in Iran. Total, the largest French oil company did sign an agreement with Iranian companies to develop new fields in and around Iran (Ewing & Reed, 2018). This shows that there was at least some interest, but it is likely that there was not the same cohesive action like in cases about energy transition.

The *Size* of the oil and gas industry is massive. Not just the size of the industry itself, but the money spent on lobby activities is massive as well. According to a recent study by Laville (2019), between 2010 and 2019 the four major corporations spent 250 million on lobby activities. This is obviously a large amount of money, making it one of the larger lobby groups. Since the size score has been relative to other actors in the same field, it would be unfair to compare this group to an entire foreign affairs department like in the previous section. The activities are way more specialized and therefore a larger proportion of their budget goes to the issue at hand.

The *Viewpoint* score of the oil and gas lobby is rather high. The economic freedom and opportunities granted by the JCPOA is nothing short of what they lobbied for. The only restriction limiting their activity, mentioned by many sources, is the recent withdrawal of the United States and the threat of US sanctions (Cimino-Isaacs & Katzman, 2017).

The oil and gas industry is likely to have had some influence on the policy outcomes of the JCPOA. Direct influence is almost impossible to measure, but in line with other policy research there seems to be a substantial influence. With the amount of money and people invested into lobby activities, this statement makes sense. It is, however, uncertain if this was also the case with the JCPOA but likely to assume that it was and that money and influence was present. Therefore, the oil and gas industry will be awarded a + for limited influence.

### 5.4.3. External influence

#### Media

The *Proximity* of the media to the JCPOA was not very high. The negotiations took a long time and the media attention span loses interest rather quick. There were various journalists stationed outside the building where the negotiations took place, so there was definitely media coverage (Laville, 2019). When the deal was finally presented, it was all over the news and the various actors will undoubtedly have felt the need to present a good deal for their nation. The media did, however, not have direct access and even their indirect influence was rather low.

*Cohesiveness* of the media is very low. Different outlets from different countries have various opinions and backgrounds. This means that there is basically no cohesiveness in media as a group of influence, at least not with international negotiations like the JCPOA. Nurhasanah & Amril (2019) show examples of the massive difference in news coverage of the negotiations and results by CNN and Al Jazeera, where CNN is a lot more U.S. favored and Al Jazeera is more Iran focused. This limits the cohesiveness.

*Size* is the only score that is of any significance here, because not only media like CNN have very large budgets, they also have a massive reach. People all over the world are informed about the negotiations by the media of their country, because essentially no one has direct access to the sources near the negotiations. So, in combining budget with the number of readers/viewers media have the size is relatively large.

The *Viewpoint* score is rather low again. This is because most of the media outlets spoke out in favor of the deal and many framed it as a victory of diplomacy (Nurhasanah & Amril, 2019). However, there were also various outlets, mostly on the conservative wing in both Iran and the United States, that strongly criticized the deal. Considering that most research into the media coverage of the JCPOA focuses on the influence of the Iranian and U.S. media, we might still argue that the influence in general was minimal.

The media are not considered a significant influence because of their low proximity and bad cohesiveness. Even though they are a large factor when united on national matters they are insignificant when this is not the case. Being an insignificant factor, the media scores a --.

#### Israeli lobby and think tanks

The *Proximity* of the Israeli political elite and think tanks was rather limited. This might be seen as rather surprising, since the stakes for Netanyahu and his nation were very big. Historically, Israel has had more influence in Washington than in Brussels (Saltzman, 2017). In the case of the JCPOA negotiations, the Israeli prime minister was personally updated on the framework by President Obama but not until after the framework was set and negotiated (Rajiv, 2016). This clearly shows that the proximity to the negotiations and decision-making were not very high. Furthermore, there is some evidence that some Israeli lobby groups and think tanks actually favored the deal, despite their own

governments' criticism (Rajiv, 2016). The only argument in favor of Israeli influence would be their influence on the US government and therefore indirect influence on the negotiations; however, since this is hard to prove and even harder to fully analyze, it only counts marginally.

The *Cohesiveness* score is debatable. As stated before, many Israeli think tanks and lobby groups actually favored the deal. Examples of people and groups that stated that the government had to tone down its criticism, were, amongst others, the former Mossad chief Meir Dagan and Commanders for Israel's Security (CIS). Therefore, even though the government was confronted with strong cohesive criticism, not all critical voices agreed. In the end the government and groups related to it are by far a majority in condemning the deal.

The *Size* score for the Israeli lobby and think tanks is hard to determine. Not all of them have actually been mobilized on the issue. According to Enthous (2015) the whole weight of the Israelian defense department was involved in the issue. This means that influencing the decision-making process of the JCPOA had a high priority. The actual size of the Israeli lobby in Brussels is, however, very small compared to others and also compared to their influence in Washington (King, 2016).

The *Viewpoint* of the government is clear, since it entirely disagreed with the terms of the JCPOA. The viewpoint of most groups related to the governments is similar, but as stated before there are some groups and people that disagree with the government.

The Israeli s overall was a rather insignificant factor of influence in the foreign policy decision making process regarding the JCPOA. Even though they had some ways to attempt to interfere and get their views across it's unlikely to have been a major factor. Therefore, the Israel lobby is given a -.

#### **5.4.4. Conclusion domestic actors**

The governmental agencies seem to have been the most important domestic actors in the decision-making process. Being the only two actors to score a ++ because on all variables they score high. It might sound obvious that the most important agencies in European foreign policy have an influential role in the decision-making process but it is important that this is confirmed by the analysis. This is an indication that the methodological approach functions as intended.

It is interesting to see how close to the decision-making process the oil and gas industry is and how little of its potential the EP is at this point realizing. The EP might become a more significant actor of time though since there are signs that they have grown more influential over recent years (Larsen 2017). The oil and gas lobby is likely to have had some influence because of their frequent access to people close to the decision-making process and the massive budget that they have to exert influence from the outside.

The media and the Israelian lobby are both actors that theoretically can have influence on decision-making processes but links are easier to find between the U.S. government and Israel then they are with the European government. The media seems more likely to have influence on national matters that are less about cooperation.

#### **5.5. Leadership analysis Frederika Mogherini**

At the most important time of the JCPOA negotiations, Federika Mogherini was the HR/VP of the European Union. According to Jessen (2017), as the HR/VP she played a significant role in the negotiations. Between 2012 and 2015 the HR/VP and her team facilitated the negotiations and pushed

them forward. A leadership analysis will shed some light on the role of Mogherini in the negotiations and whether her style and personal experience influenced the decision-making process.

As stated in the theoretical discussion, there are some factors that define how much influence a leader is likely to have (had). The most important one is the regime type, in this case a democracy. However, the position of the HR/VP is different from most other positions of power in European democracies. This will be discussed first. The second section analyzes two other important factors: Mogherini's foreign policy interest and experience. The third section of this section will consider the available information and the affinity with the issue in question, in this case the JCPOA nuclear agreement. The final section will conclude what kind of leadership style Mogherini had.

### **5.5.1. Position of the HR/VP**

Calcara (2020) offers a strong analysis of the role of the HR/VP in contemporary European security policy. An extensive comparison between Ashton, the HR/VP preceding Mogherini, and Mogherini not only shows how the role took shape in current affairs, but also how it came to be this way. For many, Ashton's leadership during her time in office was a disappointment and her influence is seen as marginal at best. During crisis situations, like the intervention in Libya, she failed to unite the European powers and lacked a strong voice. Her position was still very new, however, and building a new foreign policy apparatus is a massive undertaking. These combined factors made her influence relatively small, compared to how important the position can be (Calcara, 2020).

Shocked by the Libyan events and the division within the European Union as a result of it, the EU member states decided that the role of the HR/VP office should be more significant. Mogherini used the opportunity by drafting the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, in order to show signs of unity within the European Union (Béraud-Sudreau & Pannier, 2020). By doing so, Mogherini showed that she knows how to use the right of initiative of the HR/VP – she can propose policy and implement it as well, after approval by the EP or FAC (Morillas, 2020). Being the chair of the FAC and having the EEAS as an executive branch, means that the HR/VP actually does have rather significant power and influence in European foreign policy decision-making.

### **5.5.2. Foreign policy experience**

At 41, Mogherini was quite young when she started as HR/VP. Her predecessor, Ashton, was 53 when she was assigned the post, whereas Borrell, the current HR/VP, already was 72 when he took office. At 41, Mogherini was however not inexperienced. Acting for a short term as Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, she had spent six years in the Chamber of Deputies. She was also the head of the Italian delegation to NATO. (Nünlist, 2015) This shows that even though she is still relatively young, Mogherini has political and international leadership experience.

In addition to the positions held by Mogherini, she has shown a long-term interest in foreign policy and politics. At an early age Mogherini joined the Italian communist movement, later on the social-democratic party. From this moment on she has always been involved in international politics. She studied political sciences, specializing in political philosophy and Islamic studies (Kaca, 2015). In other words, Mogherini has experience as well as interest in foreign policy; a proper background to be influential.

### **5.5.3. Information and affinity**

The second point of analysis for an influential leader is the availability of information and the affinity a leader has with the subject or situation under analysis. As stated before, Mogherini was academically educated in the Middle Eastern culture. As Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 2014 she was strongly involved in the conflict between Israel and Gaza. She strongly condemned the rocket attacks by militants and supported Israel's right to defend itself (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). Although perhaps controversial, this stance did show interest and involvement in the conflict in the region. As stated before, Israel had relatively high stakes in the outcome of the negotiations. So, affinity with the subject was present.

The stream of information in negotiations was also present. Ronen (2010) offers a thorough description of the timeline and available information regarding nuclear energy development and potential weapon development. Ronen shows that not that much was known about the nuclear capabilities and ambitions, but by 2002 the world learned a lot more. Iranian dissidents revealed there were nuclear reactors in Natanz and Arak, producing powerful enriched nuclear material. The following years more information surfaced, leading to various UN and Western sanctions. In short, although in the past Iran has not always been open about its nuclear capabilities and facilities, by the time the negotiations about the JCPOA were taking place, officials knew about all 'secret' nuclear facilities and the situation in Iran. Not just through the official channels and Iranian communications, but also through the various intelligence agencies across the world (Ronen, 2010). This shows that there was a lot of information available to Mogherini.

### **5.5.4. Leadership style and influence**

Morillas (2020) states that Mogherini had a way more hands-on leadership approach than her predecessor Ashton; she personally took part in many strategic discussions. According to Hudson & Day (2014), a hands-on leader is a sign of direct influence. It shows confidence and control. She also appointed one of the main negotiators of the JCPOA as Secretary-General of the EEAS, which shows trust in her advisors on the matter.

Taking all into account, Mogherini was in the right position to have direct influence on the negotiations. She is experienced, well-informed, has affinity with the Middle East as a region and has personal interest in everything related to foreign policy. All these factors contribute to the observation made by Jessen (2017) that Mogherini was a key player in the process of the negotiations. It is obviously hard to say if the deal would not have passed without her role in the negotiations, but Mogherini was arguably an actor that directly contributed to the success.

## **5.6. Group decision making**

Analyzing the exact decision-making process of the JCPOA and the role that group dynamics played in it, is complicated. Referring to the theoretical section, there are many factors that can influence group decision-making. It is, however, difficult to exactly trace any of these effects in the JCPOA negotiations. The most important factors have already been analyzed in the previous sections. These are (1) the leadership style and experience of Mogherini and, given that it is not a crisis situation, (2) the other important actors as the representatives of various member states, both in the negotiations and the FAC.

This section will analyze the effect of Mogherini's leadership on the group dynamics in general. This will allow for answering the most important question regarding group dynamics: who is really in charge of the situation? If there are signs of groupthink, inexperienced leadership or overly vocal



members, we might conclude that – even though Mogherini was in charge on paper – in reality other (f)actors had a significant influence on the process.

### **5.6.1. Managing group dynamics**

Prior to the JCPOA, Mogherini's management of group dynamics has been strong in other negotiations. For instance, during the negotiations on the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy she showed a highly inclusive, hands-on leadership style. All member states were included in these negotiations, showing experience and making sure every voice was heard. (Barbé & Morillas, 2019) This is also noted by Morillas (2020), referring to a hands-on leadership style.

Mogherini has extensive international experience. As elaborated upon in a previous section, she has experience in public policy, in particular also with negotiations. This makes it less likely that negative interactions, like groupthink, will take place. It is also not very likely that other actors overshadowed her presence within her own negotiating team. As stated before, she fully trusted her chief negotiator, later appointing him to EEAS Secretary General; an illustration of a good connection to her staff. Without direct access to any of the people of the negotiating team and extensive interviews, it is however hard to find conclusive evidence. Nevertheless, it seems that Mogherini had the experience and influence called for according to a leadership analysis. She had all the characteristics of a strong leader in a democratic setting, and as far as group dynamics can be judged, it most likely had no negative effect on her influence.

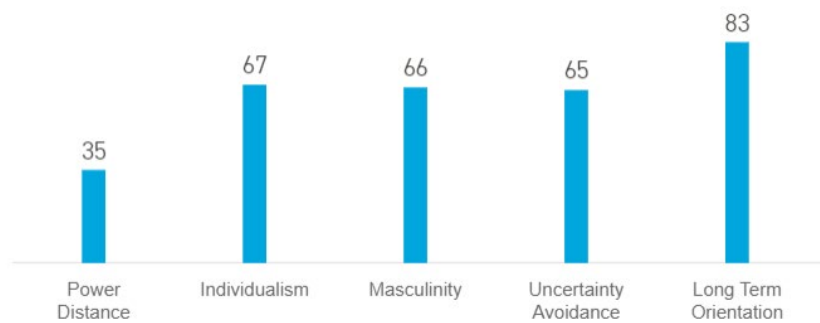
### **5.6.2. Conclusion**

Overall it seems that Mogherini fits the – theoretical – picture of an influential, hands-on leader. It is most likely that she had a direct influence on the JCPOA negotiation process, independent of the domestic actors and cultural aspects. A more thorough analysis of the group dynamics could reveal more about the influence of other actors in her team, but since Mogherini is a hands-on leader it is unlikely that anyone would have been of more influence. Her role as the HR/VP gave her considerable power in the process and her experience enabled her to make sure everything went according to plan. So, referring to group dynamics and leadership influence, Mogherini does seem to fit the theoretical requirements for being an influential actor in the decision-making process.

## **5.7. Cultural analysis**

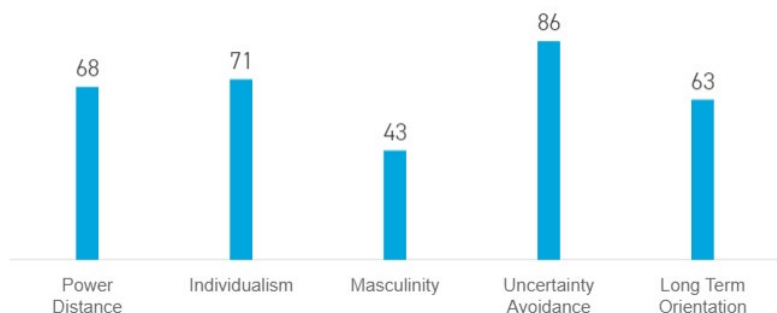
As elaborated upon in the theoretical approach, a comparison of cultures might identify potential problems in negotiations. When cultural identities between nations vary considerably, this might be an obstacle to success while on the other side cultural connections can make negotiations develop way more smooth (Brett, 2000). Hofstede's cultural database allows for a comparative analysis of the nations that were part of the negotiations. The focus in this analysis is on the European states, because they influence EU decision-making the most. This section examines the nations separately and will give a short summary of their respective cultural identities. In the end, this analysis can show whether cultural similarities might have made the negotiations run more smoothly or whether (major) differences had to be overcome. The figures below are from Hofstede's own dataset, which is updated regularly (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

### 5.7.1. Germany



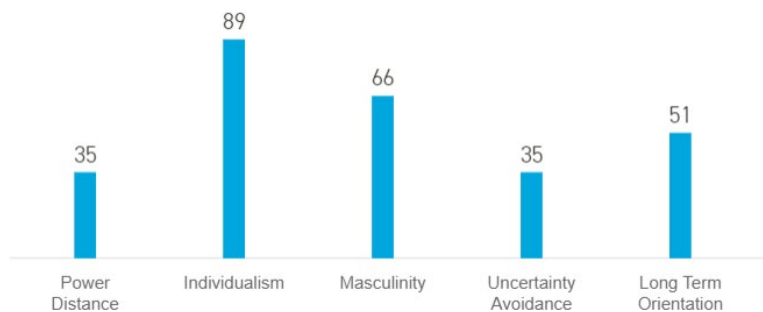
The Power distance score of Germany is rather low. This means that people feel they can influence the people in power. The main reasons for this are a decentralized government and a strong middle class. Germany is an individualistic country; people tend to look after themselves and their direct family, rather than the collective. Communication in Germany is straightforward, and Germans strongly believe in their own capabilities in order to achieve success. The Masculinity score is also rather high, which means that Germans generally value success in society and tend to show this success and status. Germany scores rather high as well on Uncertainty avoidance, which means that planning and expertise are highly valued in German society. Finally, Germany stands out for its Long-term orientation; Germany is a pragmatic country, adapting to modern times and does not stick with tradition and historical norms (Hofstede Insights 2020).

### 5.7.2. France



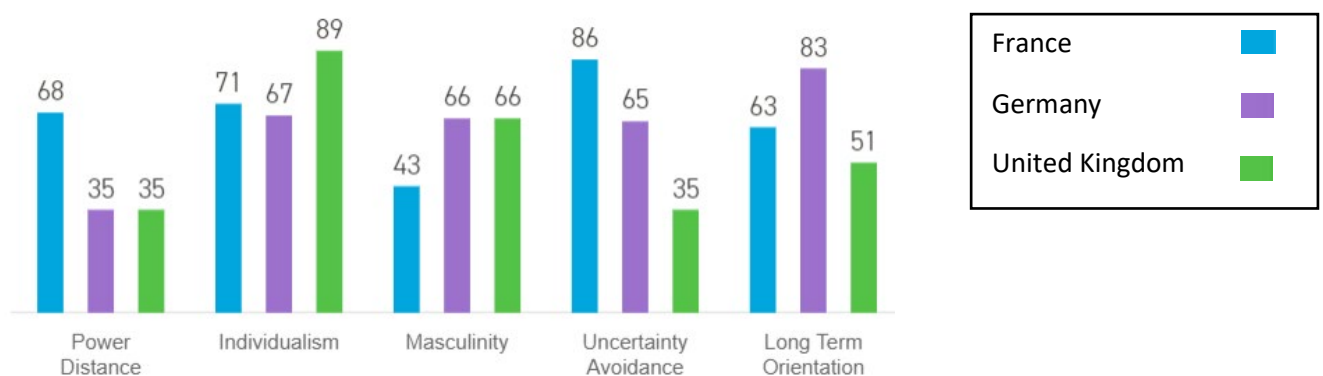
France is characterized by a high level of acceptance of unequal power distribution. In French society, for a lot of people power is relatively inaccessible. For example, most companies have more levels of hierarchy than their European counterparts. The Individualism score is comparable to Germany; most people are raised to be independent and look after themselves. France can be categorized as a relatively feminine society, where enjoying what you do is more important than success. This is illustrated by a 35-hour work week, paid vacations and in general a focus on the quality of life. The French seem to value the happiness factor higher than the success factor. The Uncertainty avoidance score of France is high. This means that people in France generally avoid uncertainty, as they do not like surprises and value planning very highly. Although France's score on Long term orientation is not as high as the German score, it is still a pragmatic society. Traditions are overcome if there is a feeling that they need to be changed. (Hofstede's Insights, 2020)

### 5.7.3. United Kingdom



The United Kingdom has a very low score on Power distance. At face value, this might seem in contradiction with the UK's class system. However, in the UK people feel that where you are born should not limit how far you can go and what positions should be available to you. The British do seem to prefer a fair playing field and equality. On the Individualism dimension, the UK has one of the highest scores of all. Children are taught to find their place in life independently and pursue their own happiness. The UK – along with the countries that were once part of the British Empire, for instance the U.S. and Australia, that are very individualist countries as well – is seen as an example of why Western societies have become more individualist over the past century. The UK is a Masculine society, driven by success. Work is the most important factor in people's lives and success is valued highly. The British might be known to be punctual, but they are not keen on exact planning of every detail. The changing of plans is quite common, with shorter planning horizons. The Uncertainty avoidance score is therefore low. Finally, the Long-term orientation dimension is undetermined in British society. No specific preference seems to be present (Hofstede Insights, 2020).

### 5.7.4. European diversity and influence of culture



As this graph shows, there are similarities between the European nations as well as differences. France stands out in the dimension of Power distance. This means that while Germany and the UK do not accept an unequal power distribution, the French culture does. People are more willing to accept hierarchy and accept that not every possible job and position is within reach. Although it can be argued that people in higher scoring countries feel more elitist and might approach other negotiators from different 'classes' in a less equal way, it is unlikely that this cultural dimension has a direct effect on the way negotiations are run. This effect of power inequality is also found in other

negotiations by Lin & Miller (2003). In other words, although France has a different cultural approach to power inequality than Germany and the UK, this probably had no (negative) effect on the negotiations of the JCPOA.

All three analyzed European countries have rather high scores on the Individualism dimension, showing comparable values on self-development. The main circle of people that are seen as someone's community is small and fluid. For the negotiations of the JCPOA this could only have been helpful. Even though direct influence is hard to see, cultural similarities can be helpful to achieve success in negotiations. Lin & Miller (2003) also took this dimension into account in their research of cultural effects on negotiation. Collectivist cultures make a strong difference in negotiations in conflicts with friendly nations over non-friendly nations. Individualist nations are more likely to take the same approach in every negotiation. This means that even if this dimension showed differences, since the European nations can be considered allied nations.

France again is the exception when it comes to how Masculine societies are. Where the UK and Germany focus on success and value climbing the social ladder, France's citizens value quality of life outside of their careers. This dimension can cause significantly different views on situations, but even though France is labelled otherwise, the absolute values are not very different. France is a rather feminine society, although in the northern parts of the country society can also have more masculine aspects.

In Uncertainty avoidance there also are interesting differences. Especially France and the UK have very different approaches to planning and structure. The British are fine with surprise and uncertainty and even value this, whereas the French are keen on planning and certainty. With Germany being closer to France in this respect, the variance is relatively high. It is possible that this affected the ease of negotiations between the EU member states. Since all nations cooperated under the leadership of Mogherini, it is possible that some tensions regarding planning and structure in the negotiations needed to be smoothed out.

There are also some minor differences in the dimension of Long-term orientation. Germany as a nation does not value tradition and culture over pragmatic politics. The same, although to a somewhat lesser extent, applies to France where tradition is slightly more important. As stated, there is no clear value for the UK determining whether or not it is long or short-term orientated as a nation. Generally speaking, pragmatic approaches will probably be favorable in negotiations like the JCPOA. Pride and tradition are not fertile grounds for successful negotiations, especially when peace is not a cultural aspect. Therefore, the pragmatic approach of the EU members was probably a positive effect.

Even though there are differences as well as similarities between the EU member states that participated in the JCPOA negotiations, their overall tendencies are rather similar. Compared to Asian nations or nations like Iran, the Europeans have similar cultural identities. The need for structure could have caused some minor issues during the negotiations, but the similarities in other dimensions would have made the cultural identities more a facilitating aspect than an obstructive one. Therefore, it is likely that the shared culture of the EU member states has contributed to successful decision-making by the EU. However most evidence of these effects are researched in different negotiations setting. This makes it possible that these effects were also there in the JCPOA but more research will be necessary to fully confirm this.

## 6. Conclusion

It seems as if the arena of international relations becomes more divided. Recent events regarding the so-called Iran deal have isolated the United States from its historical European allies. It is not that common to see the three European permanent members of the Security Council side with China and Russia on a security-related issue. This is, however, exactly what happened when the United States tried to impose snap-back sanctions on Iran for breaking the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This extensive nuclear agreement was a diplomatic achievement, reached by the permanent members of the Security Council, in combination with Germany and Iran. It ensured that Iran was unable to develop nuclear weapons and the deal put in place strict control measures. All over the world this agreement was celebrated as a victory for diplomacy – the ministers of foreign affairs that negotiated the deal presented it with pride.

In 2018, however, under a new administration, the United States officially withdrew from the deal. The leaders of the other participating nations unanimously condemned this move by President Trump. The international community was left with an interesting predicament. Instead of acting together, the European nations and the United States were divided. This situation not only brought up diplomatic and security issues, but academic questions as well. For this reason, this thesis set out to explore what (f)actors led to the European agreement as well as figuring out to what extent this explains their continued support.

In order to be able to answer this main research question in an academic way, a strong theoretical foundation is necessary. Neoclassical Realism brings this foundation. As a macro theory of international relations, Neoclassical Realism combines the insights of Realism, Neorealism and Social Constructivism. It shares the basic assumption of Realism and Neorealism that by nature international relations are conflict-prone. In contradiction to Neorealism however, the focus is not on the system as such but rather on the units within the system. At the same time, it is more fit to examine (single) cases instead of generating structural explanations. As a theory, it therefore perfectly fits the case of the JCPOA negotiations. The main point of criticism towards Neoclassical Realism is, however, that it does not offer a strong structured approach for conducting case studies. This is why Foreign Policy Analysis has been incorporated. Although this particular approach has been present for a while in many international relations debates, there are just a few examples where both theories have been combined. The Foreign Policy Analysis theory provides a strong theoretical structure for analyzing foreign policy decision-making processes and is therefore a very useful addition to the theoretical foundations of this thesis.

With NCR and FPA as the theoretical base a case study design can be set up. The negotiations of the JCPOA are typical for such high level and high stakes negotiations where many parties have interests in the outcome. There are however not that many similar examples in recent history so therefore the a qualitative research and a single case study is the best way to answer the research question. This allows for a strong internal validity, analyzing the European decision-making process. One weakness of this approach however is the external validity as influential (f)actors change over time and with different negotiations different actors are mobilized. The case study design does however give clear insights in the practical application of FPA theory and if those actors have had an influence in this case. With the help of process-tracing methods this thesis sets out to find a causal connection between the (f)actors of influence and the result of the negotiations. Therefore, unveiling what the causal pathway is to the outcome. This is a multi-step process in which the several factors identified by FPA theory are analyzed separately.

The first analyzed are the domestic actors that might have influenced foreign policy decision-making. The theory identifies numerous potential actors, but in this analysis only the mobilized ones are taken into account. In the case of the JCPOA these actors are governmental bodies (the Foreign Affairs Council, the European External Action Service and the European Parliament), interest groups (oil and gas industry) and external actors (the media and pro-Israel lobby groups). analyzed on the basis of four variables, it turns out that in particular the Foreign Affairs Council and the European External Action Service have had a crucial influence on the decision-making process. Their support for the agreement is likely to have been a crucial factor in the success because of their close ties to the negotiations and the capacities in terms of money and man power. Their perspective on the negotiations also lines up with the result.

The oil and gas-related industrial sector is also likely to have had an influence, although the (direct) links are harder to prove. The other analyzed actors – the media, the European Parliament, and the Israel lobby, respectively – showed no significant influence on the process. In other words, there was definitely a ‘domestic’, internal influence on the decision-making process regarding the JCPOA, but it was limited to just a few actors. The exact influence of these actors is hard to identify but with the indirect analysis of the general influence of these actors it is possible to state if it was likely that they have had an influence.

The second major factor analyzed refers to the characteristics of a leader and the system this leader operates in. An analysis of the EU governance structure showed that even though it is a democratic system, there is arguably room for a leader to have direct influence. The EU High Representative/ Vice-President, being the chair of the Foreign Affairs Council and the person responsible for the EEAS as well, certainly has the potential to influence decision-making quite substantially. Mogherini who held the HR/VP position during the negotiations, has shown the qualities of an experienced leader in negotiations before, building upon a lot of international experience. Furthermore, she managed group dynamics well and had all the necessary information to make informed decisions. Based on these qualities, one might say that she most likely had direct influence on the way in which the negotiations took place and also how they turned out.

The final factor of influence analyzed is the cultural factor. In Foreign Policy Analysis as well as Neoclassical Realism the cultural influence on international politics is acknowledged. Neoclassical Realism usually does not consider culture as the critical breakthrough factor, unlike Social Constructivism, but it does see it as significant. A similar approach is taken in the Foreign Policy Analysis theory. Most scholars intuitively understand that culture does play a role in international relations and decision-making, although the precise role is hard to identify. Foreign Policy Analysis theory does not offer a structural analysis of the cultural factor, but sociology does. The cultural dimensions developed and operationalized by Hofstede are used in this research, because they provide very comparable data for numerous countries. Using these dimensions and data shows that there are strong similarities as well as differences between the EU member states that took part in the negotiations. Cultural similarities might facilitate easier negotiations, while differences can make the process much harder. In general, the similarities of the EU member states are likely to have had some influence in the European decision-making process, whereas the relative differences are less likely to have had any direct influence.

So how do these results compare to other negotiation processes and the general decision-making in the European Union? This question is hard to truly answer. The goal of analyzing the decision-making process of the JCPOA has been achieved so the internal validity is strong. But as stated in the methodology discussion as well, the external validity of single case studies is always a weak point. In this case the time generalization could be an issue in the long run. The process is unlikely to change over the next couple of years but looking back at the EU over 20 years will probably paint a different picture. Therefore, this research, as most political science research in general is time-sensitive. For

this point and time however FPA has provided a strong theoretical tool to set up the analysis. Many influences that the theoretical framework discussed are likely to have played a role in the process and therefore this thesis does not only explain the outcome of a single negotiation process but also to some extent confirms the theoretical value of FPA as a theoretical approach.

In conclusion, the combination of Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Analysis provided a strong theoretical analytic base for this case study on European decision-making. Various (f)actors are shown to have been of influence on the process, while others have been identified as not influential. There are some weaknesses as well, the true interaction between the several actors is very difficult to measure. Hierarchically ordering the several influences is therefore impossible based on the data and methods used in this thesis but could be a valuable addition. Additional, further research on any of these factors can be valuable in developing a more in-depth understanding of the exact mechanics of the influence of these (f)actors. Some research has been referenced here into the link between culture and negotiations but there is a lot of room for more understanding there. On top of this there is still a lot unclear about more general EU decision-making. Interviews with direct participants can provide more understanding of group dynamics and the leadership of Mogherini. This was, however, not within the scope of this thesis. Sometimes it was hard to identify any direct links and mechanics between actors and the process, even though according to the theory a potential influence existed.

So, there are several factors that are likely to have influence on the decision-making process of the JPCOA. Many stakeholders are consulted or try to influence the process where they can. This is the case not just in this case study but in any government, international organization or even local administration. FPA and NCR have shown to form a good foundation to analyze these processes and give insights into the complex structures of European governance and therefore also give insight in why the EU initially supported the JCPOA and still does.

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