

## Research Article

### The Role of Third Parties in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Negotiation Process 2003-2015

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#### Abstract

This article analyses the JCPOA negotiation process using the Third Side Negotiation Theory by mapping three key stages: preventing, resolving, and containing. Using a qualitative case study design, with a deductive approach, this study draws on official JCPOA texts, UNSC resolutions, IAEA reports, policy documents, and secondary academic sources. The findings show that the success of the JCPOA is inseparable from the intervention of third parties—particularly the UNSC, E3, and IAEA—who played pivotal roles in preventing escalation, mediating diplomatic deadlocks, and monitoring compliance throughout the negotiation period. The study contributes to negotiation and conflict-resolution scholarship by demonstrating how third-party intervention can transform high-risk geopolitical confrontation into a cooperative, rule-based agreement, with implications for future nuclear diplomacy frameworks and multilateral negotiations involving asymmetric power relations.

**Keywords:** JCPOA, Iran, Negotiation, P5+1

#### I. Introduction

Negotiation is a form of diplomatic effort as well as an instrument of conflict resolution between actors aimed at achieving common interests through dialogue,

compromise, and the formation of international agreements (Berridge, 2015). The negotiation process is employed to avoid the use of military force, thereby strengthening international stability and promoting peaceful settlement (Malanczuk, 1997). The results of these negotiations are outlined in formal and legally binding international documents, such as treaties, conventions, or mutual agreements, to ensure compliance by the countries involved (Malanczuk, 1997).

One important practice of successful international negotiations is the formation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement in 2015, involving the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany (P5+1), as well as Iran, regarding restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme (CRS, 2024). In the formation of the agreement, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (E3) were the countries that formed the primary foundation for the negotiations. On the other hand, to prevent the escalation of tensions and the threat of more severe economic consequences, the EU Joint Commission served as a mediator, monitoring all parties involved in the agreement (Fitzpatrick, 2017). The urgency of examining the JCPOA arises from its significance as one of the most notable diplomatic outcomes in recent global security politics, particularly in addressing the risks of nuclear.

proliferation in the Middle East. Iran's nuclear activities raised concern among major powers and neighbouring states, sparking debates regarding the possibility of a regional nuclear arms race, heightened geopolitical



instability, and the threat of military escalation (CRS, 2024; Fitzpatrick, 2017). Prior to the agreement, more than a decade of sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and stalled negotiations demonstrated the difficulty of resolving nuclear disputes through coercive or unilateral strategies alone (Sauer, 2007; Mousavian, 2023). The JCPOA, therefore, represents a critical turning point—not only because it temporarily constrained Iran's nuclear capabilities under comprehensive IAEA verification mechanisms, but also because it demonstrated that complex, high-stakes security disputes could be addressed through negotiated and institutionalised frameworks rather than through military confrontation (Jolley, 2018; Mills, 2024). Its relevance extends beyond the Iran case, offering broader implications for nuclear governance, multilateral diplomacy, and conflict resolution in similarly sensitive international contexts.

The agreement aims to limit Iran's nuclear programme for the next 10 to 25 years through various technical provisions, such as limiting nuclear use to 90%, reducing the use of uranium in centrifuge operations to 6,104, and full supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Iran's uranium enrichment facilities (Jolley, 2018; Mills, 2024). As a result of the agreement, the P5+1 ended nuclear-related economic sanctions and allowed Iran to sell oil on the international market. Furthermore, the P5+1 also had to recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes (Mills, 2024).

During the 12-year intensive negotiation process between the P5+1 and Iran, the JCPOA became a testament to the

negotiations that involved various actors in diverse situations to produce an agreement of international significance (Jolley, 2018). Before the JCPOA was formed, lengthy negotiations had been conducted by the E3 and Iran for years. However, these negotiations did not achieve significant results. Therefore, this unprecedented diplomatic event between the United States and Iran is not only a significant milestone in the history of international negotiations but also highlights a notable research gap (Mousavian, 2023). While previous studies have predominantly examined state-level bargaining strategies and power politics, far fewer have analysed the mediating role of third parties in shaping the JCPOA negotiation process.

Based on this explanation, this article will raise the research question 'How did the negotiation process of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) 2003-2015?'. This article aims to fill the gap in analyzing the role of key parties in negotiations that facilitated and maintained stability during the JCPOA negotiation process from 2003 to 2015. It is based on the lack of previous studies that discuss systematically in mapping the JCPOA negotiation process through a third-party role-based approach. Therefore, this article will examine the constructive actions of third parties in preventing open conflict, resolving diplomatic deadlocks, and overseeing the implementation of the agreement.

Furthermore, this article will be divided into five main sections. The first section provides the background, problem formulation, and justification for the study's urgency. The second section will outline the



research method used. The third section outlines the theoretical framework of The Third Side Negotiation, providing the analytical foundation for understanding the JCPOA negotiation process from 2003 to 2015. Furthermore, the fourth section presents the results of the analysis by dividing the negotiation process into three main stages according to the theory: preventing, resolving, and containing. Finally, the fifth section presents the conclusions of the article's findings along with recommendations for future research.

## **II. Methods**

This article employs qualitative methods, utilizing data collection and analysis techniques that focus on non-numerical data (Lamont, 2015). Then, a deductive approach is used to examine a single-case research design by linking various independent variables with dependent variables through hypotheses. In this case, the hypothesis refers to the use of theory as the primary conceptual framework (Neuman, 2014).

The data analysed in this article consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary data used comes from the official documents of the JCPOA international cooperation and agreement in 2015, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions especially Resolution 2231 in 2015, IAEA official reports related to the inspection and verification of Iran's nuclear programme, as well as official statements released through the official websites of the countries involved. This article also extensively utilizes secondary data derived

from scientific articles, mass media articles, reports from related institutions such as the Belfer Centre and CSIS, as well as previous studies related to the JCPOA.

The data collection technique relied on a document analysis approach, using systematic literature screening to identify relevant content related to negotiation patterns, actors' behaviour, third-party roles, and compliance mechanisms. The analysis process was carried out in three stages. First, the narrative content from each source was extracted and categorised based on its relevance to the negotiation timeline. Second, the material was coded thematically using analytical dimensions derived from Ury's negotiation model—Preventing, Resolving, and Containing. Once collected, the data will be classified into appropriate indicators according to the Third Side Negotiation Theory, in order to understand the process of conflict presence, agreement creation, third-party intervention, and the acceptance of international agreements that affect the formation of international agreements.

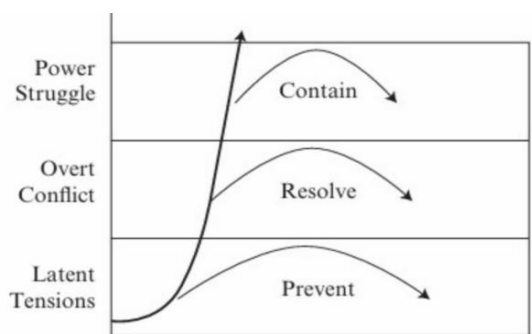
Upon further examination of the data, this article applies a triangulation strategy to strengthen the reliability of findings by comparing information across official primary documents, policy reports, and academic literature (Bryman, 2012). The analysis proceeds through narrative content analysis, which is used to reconstruct the JCPOA negotiation timeline and identify how actors' interests, strategies, and positions evolved. The coded documentary evidence is then organised deductively according to Ury's three negotiation stages; Preventing, Resolving, and



Containing—allowing the empirical material to be systematically linked to the theoretical framework. Through this combination of triangulation and thematic narrative analysis, the study ensures that claims about third-party roles are grounded in verifiable documentary evidence, yielding findings that are methodologically transparent, analytically consistent, and reflective of the complexity of the JCPOA negotiation process.

### III. The Third Side Negotiation

The Third Side Negotiation theory, as explained by William Ury, suggests that negotiation with the help of a third party is necessary to reduce the intensity of conflict by forming an agreement that would be nearly impossible to achieve without it. In this case, the involvement of a third party can act as a mediator, facilitator, and peacekeeper, which is explained in three processes in the negotiation, namely Preventing, Resolving, and Containing (Ury, 2000).



Containing roles: Witness, Referee, Peacekeeper  
Resolving roles: Mediator, Arbitrator, Equalizer, Healer  
Preventing roles: Provider, Teacher, Bridge-builder

**Figure 1.** Third Side Negotiation Theory

**Source:** (Ury, 2000)

Based on Figure 1, the Preventing stage involves the provider, teacher, or bridge-builder as the initial party that identifies the threat of conflict, educates constructively, and establishes initial communication relationships (Ury, 2000). Then, in the Resolving stage, mediators, arbitrators, equalizers, or healers facilitate dialogue to find solutions, provide decisions based on shared criteria, balance power, and restore relationships damaged by conflict or historical tensions between the countries involved (Ury, 2000). Finally, in the Containing stage, the roles of witnesses, referees, and peacekeepers focus on monitoring, providing moral pressure, enforcing rules, and maintaining peace to prevent further escalation (Ury, 2000).

The various parties involved in the negotiation process help reduce the intensity of conflicts that occur in countries without prior agreements and a high level of conflict escalation (Ury, 2000). The agreements that are formed will also focus on cessation of violence agreements, such as ceasefires, to reduce the risk of damage and create a more expansive negotiation space (Zartman, 2008; Mousavian, 2023). The stability created by an agreement is considered to foster conducive conditions, resulting in a decrease in physical intensity through trust between the parties involved (Ury, 2000). It will also reduce greater losses if negotiations are not reached, both materially and socially. Therefore, to maintain the inclusiveness of the agreement, further resolution is necessary, accompanied by monitoring that takes into account the interests of all parties, ensuring continued



compliance with the agreement (Bercovitch & Gartner, 2009).

#### **IV. Three Stages of Negotiation Process**

According to the Third Side Negotiation theory, the negotiation process involves three stages that ultimately result in an agreement between the countries involved. This article will focus on these three stages by dividing them into three time periods: 2003-2004, 2005-2012, and 2013-2015. The three levels of time were formed based on the intensity of the conflict, the parties involved, and the form of interaction carried out, which is an important momentum that marks each negotiation process that takes place.

##### **a. Preventing Stage 2003-2004**

This stage will be divided into two processes during negotiations between the EU, Iran, and the IAEA to form the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The treaty contains agreements formed by the E3, the EU High Representative, the IAEA, and Iran as parties to the negotiations.

##### **1. The 2003 Tehran Declaration**

The starting point of the Iran nuclear deal negotiations can be found in the disclosures made by the National Council of Resistance of Iran in 2002 as an Iranian political organization that opposed the Iranian regime by stating that Iran was secretly working on a nuclear weapons programme (Sauer, 2007). This resulted in the formation of the IAEA General Conference in September 2002, with the Iranian Vice President and the President of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEIO) present to look into confirming the use of

nuclear power in Iran. At the conference, Iran confirmed its efforts to initiate long-term plans for building a nuclear power plant and constructing a large nuclear-related underground facility at Natanz, as well as a heavy water production plant at Arak (IAEA, 2006). Another confirmation occurred in February 2003 by the IAEA Director General, who visited Iran, accompanied by Iran's acknowledgement of its uranium enrichment programme and new facilities located at Natanz and Arak.

As a result of these direct statements, in June 2003, the IAEA reported that Iran had failed to fulfil its obligations under the Safeguards Agreement concerning the reporting of nuclear material, the processing and subsequent use of such material, and the declaration of facilities where nuclear material is stored and processed. This led the Foreign Ministers of the E3 countries to write to Iran to further discuss the nuclear programme issue before the UNSC. The E3 also urged Iran to halt its ongoing enrichment activities and the upgrading of its uranium facilities (Mousavian, 2023). Therefore, on October 21, 2003, a meeting was held in Tehran at the initiative of the E3, inviting the E3 Foreign Ministers, the Iranian Foreign Minister, and the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (Mousavian, 2023).

During the meeting, the E3 proposed three main demands—first, Iran's full cooperation with the IAEA in some of Iran's nuclear activities. Second, Iran should sign the Additional Protocol, as it is a part of the NPT that contains ratification procedures, and ultimately, suspend Iran's uranium enrichment





and reprocessing activities. Finally, in November 2003, Iran agreed to provide a comprehensive description of its nuclear activities, accompanied by an agreement to sign the Additional Protocol. On December 18, 2003, Iran signed the Additional Protocol under the Safeguards Agreement on nuclear non-proliferation.

Despite the agreement, in September 2004, Iran began converting Uranium into Uranium gas, or one step further towards Uranium conversion with possible military use. This created tension at the negotiating table and required E3, as the EU's representative, to urge Iran to cooperate and immediately halt its enrichment activities (Sauer, 2007).

## 2. Paris Agreement 2004

Iran's violations led to an IAEA Board of Governors meeting on 18 September 2004. The IAEA issued a resolution urging Iran to provide all necessary information before the next meeting, scheduled for November 2004. If Iran did not submit the report, a report would be prepared and sent to the UN Security Council (Sauer, 2007).

The next meeting was held in Paris on November 15, 2004, with the EU High Representative in attendance. Generally, the Paris Agreement required Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities during talks with the E3 and the EU (Davenport, 2018). In this agreement, the EU reaffirmed Iran's commitment to the NPT and acknowledged Iran's rights under the NPT, particularly the right to enrichment for peaceful purposes (Mousavian, 2023). These negotiations saw Iran reaffirm that it does not and will not seek

to acquire nuclear weapons and commit to full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA. Furthermore, to build trust with the EU, Iran reaffirmed that it would voluntarily continue and expand its suspension to cover all activities related to its enrichment and reprocessing nuclear activities.

During this stage, the E3 demonstrated initiative by taking early Leadership in shaping diplomatic engagement with Iran. However, the progress achieved during this period was fragile, mainly because the agreements relied on voluntary commitments rather than robust enforcement mechanisms. Iran's subsequent resumption of enrichment activities suggests that the E3 lacked sufficient leverage to transform temporary de-escalation into durable compliance, reflecting both the limits of persuasion-based diplomacy and the absence of unified international pressure at this early stage.

Based on the Preventing stage, which describes the negotiations and meetings from 2003 to 2004, the E3 and the IAEA represent the provider, teacher, or bridge-builder as parties that initiated the negotiations, recognizing the potential for conflict escalation (Sauer, 2007; Davenport, 2018). The E3 and the IAEA also constructively educated and established initial communication links with Iran through the two established agreements, creating conditions conducive to peaceful relations by preventing the development of conflict into open conflict (IAEA, 2006; Davenport, 2018). This stage also demonstrates how the E3 and the IAEA acted as early bridge-builders, educators, and providers by initiating dialogue, identifying the



risks of nuclear escalation, and establishing initial norms of cooperation. Their efforts aligned with Ury's Preventing role by reducing the likelihood of conflict escalation and building the foundational trust necessary for formal negotiations.

**b. Resolving Stage 2005-2012**

This stage will be divided into two processes of the negotiation journey among the P5+1, Iran, and the IAEA. The series of attempts and meetings that took place did not result in an agreement between the parties involved. This was also accompanied by various changes in Presidential leadership in the countries involved, which made the negotiations experience numerous obstacles.

**1. Sanctions by the UN**

The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 led to political change in Iran. Ahmadinejad openly stated that Iran had the right to enrich uranium as a national priority and part of Iran's sovereignty, so Iran continued enrichment and uranium conversion activities at several nuclear facilities. As a result, the EU halted its negotiations with Iran, and the IAEA issued several warnings that were ignored by Iran (Davenport, 2018). Therefore, the IAEA and E3 recognized that negotiations with Iran were no longer viable and that the UNSC was needed to deal with Iran's nuclear activities (IAEA, 2006).

With the involvement of the UNSC in Iran's case, the issue of sanctions to be imposed on Iran arose. EU High Representative Javier Solana recommended limited sanctions on Iran, such as visa bans on key Iranian officials, and clarified the EU's position on

military actions in Iran to the detriment of the international community (MacAskill & Tait, 2006). As a result of global security concerns and UNSC involvement, in June 2006, China, Russia, and the United States joined the EU to form the P5+1 to propose a framework agreement to Iran that offered incentives for Iran to suspend its enrichment programme (Davenport, 2018). The P5+1 made demands in 2003 for full cooperation and reassessment by the IAEA, as well as the suspension of all enrichment activities and verification by the IAEA. It urged Iran to implement the Additional Protocol it had previously signed (Solana, 2006).

In the same year, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1696 of 2006, which made it legally binding for Iran to honour the IAEA's call for the suspension of nuclear enrichment and reprocessing-related activities, with imposed deadlines (Davenport, 2018). However, Iran did not meet the deadline set by the UNSC and was sanctioned by Resolution 1737 in the same year. Resolution 1747 in 2007 and Resolution 1803 in 2008 were follow-up resolutions that focused on sanctioning arms sales to Iran and tightening other sanctions (Davenport, 2018).

Despite the sanctions, the P5+1 negotiated with Iran through the formation of cooperation proposals and ultimately held meetings with Iran in Geneva and Istanbul. However, these meetings did not result in substantive agreements and were considered to only benefit the Iranian side. Then, in October 2009, the P5+1 and Iran agreed to a proposal regarding one of Iran's nuclear facilities. The proposal involved a fuel swap, whereby Iran would export 3.5% enriched



uranium in exchange for 20% enriched uranium fuel. However, domestic opposition and prominent Iranian politicians voiced their objections to the arrangement, so the implementation of the proposal did not materialize (Davenport, 2018).

In the same year, UNSC Resolution 1835 was again issued, reaffirming previous resolutions adopted regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Like several resolutions issued previously, Iran still ignores several resolutions that have been issued and continues to carry out nuclear development activities (Zartman, 2021).

## 2. Sanctions by the UNSC, US, and EU

On June 9, 2010, UNSC Resolution 1929 was adopted, significantly expanding sanctions against Iran. This included tightening sanctions related to proliferation as well as a ban on Iran's ballistic missile activities, an arms embargo on the transfer of Iran's major weapons systems, a ban on companies from other countries working with Iran's energy industry, and a ban on financial transactions with Iranian banks, (Davenport, 2018).

The Council of the European Union also provided a comprehensive EU sanctions package against Iran, by UNSC resolutions, covering trade, financial services, energy, transport, as well as visa bans and asset freezes (Council of the EU, 2012). Along with this, the United States also adopted the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act to expand economic sanctions against Iran (United States Congress, 2010). As a result, the P5+1's reconvening meetings with Iran in Geneva and Istanbul did not yield any

substantive agreements due to a lack of support from the various parties to the negotiations (Davenport, 2018).

In 2012, the IAEA reported Iran's Uranium enrichment operations at a 20% level at a deeply buried underground facility in Fordow (Council of the EU, 2012). Therefore, the Council of the EU began implementing additional restrictive measures in the energy sector including a phased embargo on Iranian crude oil imports to the EU, the financial sector, the transport sector, further export restrictions on gold and goods and technology, as well as additional designations of persons and entities (Council of EU, 2012).

Based on the explanation above, the Resolving stage is the stage with the highest level of negotiation intensity based on Ury's Resolving role. The P5+1 and the UNSC are the parties that represent the role of mediators, arbitrators, and equalizers in facilitating dialogue to find solutions, providing decisions based on shared criteria, and balancing power (Zartman, 2021). The P5+1 also plays an important role as a mediator who restores damaged relations following the change of President in Iran, which has an impact on creating obstacles to negotiations. In this case, the P5+1 countries also play a significant role in the negotiation process, which has not ceased at every opportunity, as a representation of a form of problem-solving negotiation, examining the substantive context and prioritizing win-win solutions in the various agreements reached.





c. Containing Stage 2013-2015

This stage will explain the process of open and secret negotiations conducted with minimal conflict escalation compared to previous years. At this stage, another party, namely Oman, a country that initiated a secret meeting between the US and Iran to conduct negotiations, also became involved.

Previously, in February 2013, the P5+1 held a meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, without producing an agreement, and no further meeting agenda was scheduled (Davenport, 2017). In March 2013, the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos bin Said Al Said, offered to secretly host a three-day meeting between US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Khaji. This marked a new beginning for the US and Iran, as they began secret bilateral talks in November 2013 (Trynor, 2013).

It also coincided with the election of Hassan Rouhani to the Iranian presidency, who called for the resumption of negotiations with the P5+1 and Iran (Davenport, 2018). The Iranian president replaced Iran's negotiating team led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, a career diplomat who had spent almost half his life in the US, in a meeting with the P5+1 in August (Belfer Centre, 2018). On September 26, 2013, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, the P5+1 foreign ministers also met with Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, who presented a new proposal for negotiations to the P5+1. Therefore, all parties agreed to meet in Geneva on October 15, 2013 (Davenport, 2018).

Meetings between the P5+1 and Iran took place over three stages in Geneva, on 15-16 October, 7-10 November, and 20-24 November. In these meetings, the basic design of substantive negotiations and the projected future cooperation between the countries resulted in positive steps regarding the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. The negotiations were depicted at a multidimensional level, involving several multilateral meetings and bilateral reunions among all actors involved in the negotiation process (Traynor, 2013). Ultimately, on November 24, 2013, the P5+1 and Iran announced the formation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA), which provided limited temporary sanctions relief to Iran, subject to oversight by the IAEA (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2017). The JCPOA was then implemented on January 20, 2014, and is considered a long-term, comprehensive solution (Jolley, 2018).

Additional rounds of negotiations took place in Vienna in June, July and November 2014 (Davenport, 2018). The multiple rounds of talks were the result of an impasse in the negotiations. It was due to recurring disagreements between the parties regarding the limits of Iran's uranium enrichment capacity and the duration of the restrictions on nuclear activities. As a result, another meeting was held from December 2014 to March 2015 to reach an agreement on the general framework of a comprehensive nuclear deal (Davenport, 2018). In July 2015, intensive negotiations were conducted by all parties in Vienna over a period of two weeks, resulting in an agreement on the JCPOA.



The JCPOA is considered a historic agreement that ensures Iran's nuclear programme exclusively has peaceful purposes. The agreement includes Iran's long-term plans, with agreed-upon limits on Iran's nuclear program, and will result in the comprehensive lifting of all sanctions in UNSC resolutions (Davenport, 2018). It also deals with the lifting of multilateral and national sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme in access measures in various sectors, such as trade, technology, finance, and energy (Mogherini & Zarif, 2015). The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 and implemented in January 2016, with IAEA verification confirming that Iran fulfilled its commitments under the nuclear deal. Subsequently, UNSC Resolution 2231 came into force, and Iran implemented various measures that included modification of existing nuclear facilities and infrastructure. The EU also lifted temporary sanctions, and the US provided temporary waivers following the JCPOA (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2017).

Based on the explanation above, this stage illustrates Ury's final Third Side role, where peacekeepers, witnesses, and rule enforcers ensure compliance and prevent renewed escalation. The involvement of the UNSC, IAEA monitoring mechanisms, and Oman's facilitation of confidential talks contributed to stabilising the negotiation environment and sustaining commitment until the JCPOA was concluded, demonstrating how containment mechanisms can reinforce trust and safeguard agreements during critical final phases.

Furthermore, the culmination of negotiations reflects a shift toward more measurable and enforceable solutions (Zartman, 2021; Davenport, 2018), driven by the mutual interest of both sides in avoiding further escalation in the form of economic sanctions, embargoes, and renewed nuclear developments. However, while third-party involvement was ultimately instrumental in reaching consensus, its role was not uniformly constructive throughout the process. The repeated rounds of sanctions, procedural delays, and sometimes fragmented mediation approaches prolonged negotiations and, at times, reinforced mistrust rather than reducing it. Thus, the Containing stage demonstrates that third-party intervention operated both as a catalyst and a constraint—pressuring Iran toward compliance while simultaneously extending the diplomatic timeline before a final comprehensive agreement could be achieved (Zartman, 2021; Belfer Center, 2018).

## V. Conclusion

This article explains the negotiation process in the JCPOA from 2003 to 2015, utilizing the Third Side Negotiation theory by William Ury. Through three main stages—Preventing, Resolving, and Containing—the article outlines the role of third parties, such as the UNSC, E3, and IAEA, which helped lower the intensity of the conflict by shaping the process and outcome of negotiations that were previously almost impossible. During the Preventing stage, the E3 and the IAEA functioned as early bridge-builders and educators by initiating dialogue and reducing escalation risks. In the Resolving stage, the



UNSC and the P5+1 acted as mediators, arbitrators, and equalizers, facilitating structured diplomatic engagement and imposing calibrated pressure to shift bargaining positions. Finally, in the Containing stage, the IAEA, the UNSC, and Oman served as peacekeepers, witnesses, and rule enforcers by maintaining monitoring, enabling confidential diplomacy, and ensuring compliance until the JCPOA was concluded.

The main findings indicate that the involvement of these third parties was crucial in preventing open conflict, rebuilding trust between the countries involved, and ensuring the agreement's implementation through regular monitoring. The three stages of the negotiation process help to explain the flow of negotiations, intentions, interests, and efforts made by various actors more specifically.

This article suggests that multi-actor mediation frameworks remain highly relevant for future nuclear diplomacy. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on the co-existence of formal mechanisms and flexible informal channels, including back-channel diplomacy and confidence-building efforts. Accordingly, future research may further examine how informal negotiation mechanisms interact with institutional frameworks in shaping long-term compliance and agreement durability in similarly sensitive international negotiations. An in-depth analysis of the communication carried out by diplomats, Track II diplomacy, and backchannel diplomacy by crucial actors representing the countries involved can be conducted to develop studies on micro-diplomacy.

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