

Stopping the “World’s Greatest Threat”: Canadian Policy and Rhetoric towards the Iranian Nuclear Program during Stephen Harper’s Conservative Government, 2006-2015

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2008

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Canada has long stood firm against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. When the Conservative government of Stephen Harper was elected in 2006, Canada departed significantly from many traditional aspects of its foreign policy, including some of its anti-nuclear proliferation policies. However, Harper's government continued the previous government's strong stance against Iran's secretive nuclear program. Rhetoric from Harper and other members of his government concerning Iran and its nuclear program became increasingly alarmist and belligerent through the course of the administration. This rhetoric reached a peak after the Conservatives were elected to a majority government in 2011, when it started to become intertwined with Canadian policy on Iran. Although the position of the Canadian government had been developed in conjunction with its Western allies, Canadian solidarity with its allies began to unravel after the election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in August, 2013. Rouhani took a less confrontational approach to Western countries opposed to its nuclear program, and re-opened negotiations with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany, in order to give the international community confidence that Iran's nuclear program could not create weapons. As negotiations progressed, Harper and his government did not soften their tone or ease their policies regarding the nuclear program. The Conservative Members of Parliament consistently used more hyperbolic rhetoric about the Iranian nuclear program in interviews and public releases than when addressing Parliament. This suggests that part of the motivation for its tough position on Iran's nuclear program was domestic politics. The Canadian position on Iran's nuclear program was also driven by Harper and his cabinet ministers' personal beliefs and the government's heightened concern for the safety of Israel.

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Introduction

At a press conference in September 2009, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper declared that a nuclear-armed Iran would be a “tremendous threat.”¹ In the following years, Harper’s foreign minister, John Baird, and other members of his Conservative Party caucus would label Iran the “most significant threat to the world,” and the “world’s greatest threat.”² Harper’s comment in 2009 was a notable escalation of Canadian rhetoric on Iran’s nuclear program. In 2010, rhetoric continued to intensify until it reached a crescendo of hyperbole in 2012 which continued until the end of the administration in 2015. It was also in 2012 when Canadian policy towards Iran’s nuclear program started to morph, moving from a multilateral sanctions regime to a more unilateral one. The next year, Iran entered into serious negotiations about its nuclear program with international powers and the tense international situation started to subside. However, Canadian policy and rhetoric towards Iran’s nuclear program did not reflect these changes in the international political climate.

Canada’s relationship with Iran has been beset by turbulence since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The discovery in 2002 and 2003 of secret and seemingly nefarious facilities connected to Iran’s nuclear energy program created a new dimension of mistrust. Canada has always prided itself as an important leader in the spread of global peaceful nuclear energy use. It helps to govern the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), which ensures the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy, and is a committed supporter of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Canada was thus immediately at odds with Iran over the exposed violations. After

¹ Quoted in “Iran’s nuclear plans ‘abhorrent’; Harper supports G20 call on Iran to come clean about secret nuclear program,” *Times & Transcript (New Brunswick)*, September 26, 2009, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

² Quoted in “Canada Closes Embassy in Iran, to Expel Iranian Diplomats,” *Reuters*, September 7, 2012, World News, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-iran/canada-closes-embassy-in-iran-to-expel-iranian-diplomats-idUSBRE8860QC20120907>; “Nuclear inspections in Iran a must: Cannon.” *Windsor Star*, May 31, 2010, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (hereafter HCD), 30 May 2013, 17356; 31 January 2012, 4663.

the election of Stephen Harper's Conservative Party of Canada to a minority government in 2006, Canadian rhetoric against Iran's nuclear program became increasingly alarmist. Following the election of the Conservatives to a stable majority government in May 2011, Ottawa-West Member of Parliament (MP) John Baird became Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian government's pronouncements against Iran's nuclear program became especially bellicose. Harper's government also loudly opposed other aspects of the Iranian government's behaviour, including the violent suppression of internal dissent, the persecution of religious minorities, especially Baha'i people, threats levied against Israel, declarations of Holocaust denial by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), and the sponsorship of groups designated as terrorist by Canada, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

The alarmist and at times aggressive tone towards Iran accompanied a general shift in Canadian foreign policy under the Harper administration. Critics such as Canada's former ambassadors to the United Nations (UN) Paul Heinbecker and Robert Fowler, and prominent Canadian scholars decried this change.³

This paper demonstrates that the Conservative government's tone and policy towards Iran initially followed the same course as the previous Liberal administration, but then began to change after the Harper administration's election to a second minority government in 2008 and especially after it won a majority government in 2011. This paper establishes that policy and rhetoric became intertwined. Hostile rhetoric against Iran was followed by more aggressive

³ "Policy cost Canada UN seat: ex-ambassador." *CBC News*, October 13, 2010, politics, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/policy-cost-canada-un-seat-ex-ambassador-1.964330>; Jonathan Montpetit, "Robert Fowler says Canada's foreign policy ruined by special interests," *Canadian Press*, March 28, 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20100331185014/http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/100328/national/liberals_thinkers_foreign (accessed July 24, 2019); Adam Chapnick, "Middle Power No More - Canada in World Affairs since 2006," *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 14, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2013): 101; Tom Keating, "Whither the Middle-Power Identity? Transformations in the Canadian Foreign and Security Milieus," in *Canada's Foreign and Security Policy: Soft and Hard Strategies of a Middle Power*, eds. Nik Hynek and David Bosold (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

policies towards Iran including more stringent sanctions and attempts to influence Iranian public discourse through the internet. The government's rhetoric in interviews, press conferences and government press releases was more hyperbolic, but its escalation followed a similar chronological pattern as its members' comments during debates in the House of Commons.

In order to give context to the Harper government's policies towards the Iran nuclear program, this paper is divided into 3 sections with a total of 9 chapters. The first chapter surveys the history of Canadian-Iranian relations to show that these relations had long been poor and unstable. The next examines Iran's nuclear program and that country's threats towards Israel. From its inception, Iran's nuclear program has posed difficulties to outside observers in deciphering the intentions of the program as solely peaceful or military. The uncertainty around the nature of Iran's nuclear program provided the Harper government with both parliamentary and public support for its scepticism and opposition to the program, while Iran's threats towards Israel continued to provoke Canadian Parliamentarians to outrage.

Next, this paper charts the history of Canadian external nuclear policies, highlighting significant events and changes through what otherwise appear to be long periods of consistency. This suggests that the change in Harper's stances towards Iran's nuclear program was an unusual development, but not entirely unprecedented. To support this claim, examples of Canada's core foreign policy towards India's and Israel's nuclear weapons programs illustrate how the Harper administration did not fully follow past principles of Canadian nuclear weapons policies.

This paper compares the Conservative government's rhetorical and policy changes in Parliament with other public forums such as newspapers, interviews and press releases. Parliamentary debate is in a separate chapter from other, more direct forms of public communication the government used in order to demonstrate that the difference in the magnitude

of the government's rhetoric in the more direct forms of public communications played a role in the Conservative's domestic electoral strategy.

Finally, this paper attempts to understand the motivations behind Stephen Harper's Conservative government's policies towards the Iran nuclear program. They have been influenced by a combination of: support for, and lobbying by, Canada's friends and allies, especially by the government's strong concern for the security of Israel; the personal beliefs of key members of the government; and, domestic political considerations. Harper's policy also presents a continuation of Canada's traditionally strong stance against nuclear programs which it fears to be military in nature.

Methodology and Historiography

It was surprisingly difficult to chart the evolution of Canadian policy toward Iran's nuclear program. Global Affairs Canada informed me by email that there was no specific stated governmental policy on the Iran nuclear program; rather the policy was whatever position was stated by the government in public announcements.¹ To find these positions, I first turned to several types of primary sources. The Canadian Parliamentary Hansard provided access to what Canadian Parliamentarians were saying about Iran and its nuclear program during question period and legislative sessions throughout the entire span of the Harper administration (2006-2015). Since there are thousands of pages in Hansard, I key-word searched "Iran" and read the entries found by the generator. I would examine the entries before and after if it looked like there would be useful information surrounding the entries found in the search. There remains a risk that certain entries about the Iranian nuclear program didn't specifically use the word "Iran" or that the search engine did not pick up all the times Iran was used. I did, for example, serendipitously, find several references to Iran that were not discovered by the search engine. In addition to Hansard, I used other government records available online. These include official announcements by the Government of Canada/Global Affairs Canada, although finding announcements was complicated, since some releases have been removed or taken down from government webpages. I also accessed reports on Iran by the Canadian Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as memorandum released by international organizations such as the Group of Eight (G8).²

¹ Global Affairs Canada, email to Jonathan Ballin, June 26, 2019. See Appendix 1.

² The G8 became the G7 after Russia was removed from the group following its annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, in March 2014.

I selected newspaper articles that either quoted Canadian politicians' comments or provided analysis on Iran and its nuclear program. To find articles, I used the LexisNexis database, Google searches, the bibliographies of articles and books on the topic, and the suggestions of my supervisor. In this paper, I compare the parliamentary debate that I read in Hansard to statements by government officials in newspapers and press releases; these sections are different from the rest of the paper because they rely more on direct quotes.

While examining Hansard and newspapers, I deduced Canadian politicians' rhetoric to be hyperbolic or exaggerated by comparing it to my research on the purpose and capacity of Iran's nuclear program, the capability of Iran's military (especially its missile program), and the articulation of Iran's strategic goals. Additionally, I weighed the rhetoric emanating from Canada's politicians with what analysts were saying about the nature of Iran's potential threat and their thoughts on the tone of Canada's response to it.

Research on this topic was complicated by its contemporary nature. Not enough time has elapsed for students to thoroughly investigate and analyse Harper's time as prime minister. Despite being an important aspect of Canada's foreign policies, Harper's Iran policies have not been evaluated in depth and there continues to be a dearth of literature on the subject.³ There are few academic works touching on Canada's response to the Iranian nuclear program and none based solely on the topic, making it necessary to pick out small bits of information from a variety of different articles and books, mostly written on more general themes in Canadian foreign policy and relations. The academic works which contribute most to my knowledge on the Harper government's positions on the Iran nuclear program are Robert Bookmiller's *Engaging Iran: Australian and Canadian Relations with the Islamic Republic*, Philippe Dumas's "La Politique

³ Philippe Dumas, "La politique iranienne du Canada: manifestation d'une culture stratégique néocontinentaliste?" *Études Internationales* 45, no. 4 (2014): 625.

iranienne du Canada” and Thomas Juneau’s “A story of Failed Re-Engagement: Canada and Iran, 2015-2018.”⁴

Robert Bookmiller’s *Engaging Iran* is by far the most comprehensive and detailed source on Iranian-Canadian relations. Bookmiller even includes a chapter on Canada and Australia’s involvement with, and responses to, Iran’s nuclear program. The chapter exploring Iran’s nuclear program mostly uses the framework of multinational organizations and multilateral initiatives to examine Canada’s (and Australia’s) involvement with Iran’s nuclear program post-2000, rather than focusing on the bilateral impact on relations caused by the secret expansion of Iran’s nuclear program. Unfortunately this book was published before the Harper government escalated its rhetoric towards Iran’s nuclear program.

Philippe Dumas’s “La politique iranienne du Canada: manifestation d’une culture stratégique néocontinentaliste?” examines at many of the same elements that this paper studies, including the rhetoric of the Harper government towards Iran and the motivations behind its Iran policy. Dumas’s goal is to see if Canada’s Iran policy was evidence that Stephen Harper had a neoconservative foreign policy. By not examining rhetoric in Parliament, Dumas misses the influence of the Liberal party in shaping rhetoric towards Iran during the years of the Conservative minority. Also, he doesn’t note the escalating rhetoric before 2012, the year when he says rhetoric changed.

Thomas Juneau’s “A Story of Failed Re-Engagement” focuses on Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government’s failed desire to re-establish relations with Iran. Nevertheless, a significant section of the article is devoted to Canadian-Iranian relations under the Harper government, since it set the stage for the difficulties the Trudeau government encountered when it attempted to re-

⁴ Robert Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran: Australian and Canadian Relations with the Islamic Republic* (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2009); Dumas “La politique iranienne du Canada”; Thomas Juneau, “A Story of Failed Re-Engagement: Canada and Iran, 2015-2018,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 25, no. 1 (2019): 39-53.

engage with Iran. It is my only academic source that looks at the impact of the Iranian Canadian community in affecting Canadian policy towards Iran.

Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha's anthology, *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy*, provides several chapters with useful insights into the causes and effects of Harper's foreign policy.⁵ Since the anthology was written by many different academic authors, viewpoints differed. Adam Chapnick's "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy" provides useful information on the relationship between Israel and Harper.⁶ Chapnick develops his thesis that Harper's personal views were the guiding factor in Canada's Israel policy by demonstrating the consistency of Harper's Israel policy, in spite of electoral factors or even Israel's concerns. David Carment and Joseph Landry's "Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy," provides important insight into the role of diasporas in affecting the policies of Harper's Conservatives.⁷ This chapter focuses on Chinese, Indian and Ukrainian Canadians, so I could not fully benefit from their case studies.

Journalist Mike Blanchfield's *Swingback: Getting Along in the World with Harper and Trudeau* is not an academic work, but it is well sourced and Blanchfield mentions that it was written in conjunction with his master's degree in journalism. As a journalist covering defense and foreign policy issues in Parliament, he draws on some strong background knowledge when discussing Harper's foreign policy and is able to place events into context effectively. Most of

⁵ *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

⁶ Adam Chapnick, "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy," in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 105-120.

⁷ David Carment and Joseph Landry, "Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy," in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 210-230.

Blanchfield's content on the Middle East focuses on Israel: Iran is only brought in for a few paragraphs, and then only due to its relationship with Israel.⁸

Another important work on which this paper draws is Donald Barry's "Canada and the Middle East Today: Electoral Politics and Foreign Policy."⁹ This article provides a significant amount of information on the links between Canadian domestic politics, mainly through electoral politics and lobbies, and Canada's Middle East foreign policies. The article would have been strengthened with more information about the Canadian Arab and Muslim communities' impacts on Canada's policy. It focuses mostly on Jewish Canadians. Sometimes Barry does not adequately cite (or paraphrase) his sources. Also, some of his sources could not be traced.

I could find smaller amounts of useful information in the general literature on Stephen Harper and his Canadian Conservative Party (CPC). These books were written contemporaneously to the Harper's time in power. The problem with many of these sources is they appear to have political agendas, trying to convince readers to support or oppose the government.¹⁰

⁸Mike Blanchfield, *Swingback: Getting Along in the World with Harper and Trudeau* (Kingston, Ont.-Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

⁹ Donald Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today: Electoral Politics and Foreign Policy" *Arab Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 191-217.

¹⁰ Books like *Harperland*, *Harperism*, *the Arrogant Autocrat*, *The Ugly Canadian* and *Party of One* all contain clear negative messages about Harper and his government. They were all published during the years Harper was in power, thus I can infer these books were designed to influence public opinion against the government. Other titles such as *The Right Balance*, *Stephen Harper and the Future of Canada*, and *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper* took a more sympathetic view of Harper and the Conservative Party and may have aimed to soften public viewpoints of Harper, who was often considered an icy, technocratic leader. *Globe and Mail* journalist John Ibbitson's biography *Stephen Harper*, published a couple months before Harper lost the 2015 election, appears to be the most matter-of-fact book on Harper, with fewer clear value statements. Ibbitson's biography attempts to provide multiple perspectives on the man. His is the source most commonly cited source in post-2015 academic articles when scholars sought insights into the Canadian prime minister's past.

The structure and topics this paper addresses have also been illuminated by the shift in diplomatic historiography since 1980.¹¹ Diplomatic history has traditionally been the study of the relations between states, informed by archival materials and correspondences between those involved in foreign policy. In 1980, diplomatic historian Charles Maier wrote an influential critique of diplomatic history, where he accused the discipline of “marking time,” rather than innovating and creating influential new works of scholarship like other historical fields, especially social and cultural history.¹² Maier suggested studying many different factors shaping a state’s interests, including not only statesmen, but bureaucrats, social classes and cultural and ethnic groups seeking influence.¹³ Maier concluded that diplomatic history must be able to adopt useful approaches from other historical fields as well as from the social sciences and use them to analyze political structures, cultural systems and economic arrangements.¹⁴ Over the following three decades, other diplomatic historians followed Maier by writing critiques and suggestions for the field. Some of the propositions most influential to the research for this paper were: Thomas McCormick’s suggestion to study non-governmental actors’ (such as lobbies’) influence on foreign policy; Michael Hunt’s advice to look more broadly at international relations when assessing bilateral relations; Michael Hogan’s recommendation to study international movements such as the global human rights movement, anti-colonial movements and religious movements;

¹¹ There has been inconsistency in the use of the phrase “diplomatic history”: some refer to the field as synonymous with “foreign relations history” or “foreign policy history,” while others call it “international history,” which sometimes reflects the evolution of the field to include a wider range of theories, methodologies and topics.

¹² Charles Maier, “Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations,” in *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing In the United States*, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 355.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 387.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 387.

and David Reynolds's suggestion to study "otherness" and the creation of threats to unify heterogeneous states as a lens to examine foreign relations.¹⁵

These academics informed this paper's methodological approach, which ultimately seeks to offer a broader understanding of the relations between Canada and Iran. I examine a wide context of factors which may have influenced Harper's policy towards Iran and its nuclear program. I inspect not only the actions of Canadian policy makers, but also the ideals, beliefs and cultural biases of the principal actors shaping Canadian foreign policy during this time, Stephen Harper and John Baird. This essay studies the influence of domestic politics, including the roles of ethnic and religious groups, and of lobbies, on Canadian foreign policy. There is also an examination of the broader influence of Canada's international partners in swaying Canadian policy on Iran and its nuclear program, both in the context of multinational institutions such as the UN, NATO and the G8, and in the context of Israel's bilateral relationship with Canada. Human rights and economic interests are both discussed when they have an impact on Canadian-Iranian relations.¹⁶

¹⁵ Thomas J. McCormick, "Drift or Mastery? A Corporatist Synthesis for American Diplomatic History," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (1982): 320; Michael Hunt, "The Long Crisis in U.S. Diplomatic History: Coming to Closure," *Diplomatic History* 16, no.1 (1992): 128; Michael Hogan, "The 'Next Big Thing': The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age," *Diplomatic History* 28, no. 1, (1 January 2004): 14; David Reynolds, "International History, the Cultural Turn and the Diplomatic Twitch," *Cultural and Social History* 3, no.1 (2006): 79-85.

¹⁶ Jonathan Ballin, "Diplomatic History: A Return to the Historiographical Mainstream?" (Essay, University of Victoria, December 3, 2018), 20.

Section 1: Background

Chapter 1: The History of Canadian-Iranian Relations

Historically, Canada had a limited relationship with Iran and most other Middle Eastern states due to its hesitancy to engage economically with the region, which had been marked with political instability.¹ Canadian interests in Iran were handled by Britain until 1955, at which point formal diplomatic relations were established.² The principal aspect of the countries' bilateral relations was Canada's import of petroleum from Iran, leading Canada to a massive trade deficit, especially after the 1973 oil shock. In 1974, for example, Canada imported almost \$620 million in petroleum from Iran while exporting only \$60 million worth of goods to Iran, a 10:1 trade disadvantage.³ Flush with oil revenue, the Iranian government invested \$1.3 billion in Canadian companies during the inaugural meeting of the (Canada-Iran) Joint Economic Commission that same year.⁴ After Iranian Shah (King) Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's pro-Western monarchy fell to revolution in January 1979, the Islamic Republic which replaced it took almost completely opposite foreign policy positions in reaction to both the perception that the Shah had been a puppet to Western interests, and the new regime's growing international isolation.⁵

The Canadian relationship with Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 can best be described as fraught and unstable. The instability triggered by the revolution caused the economic connection between the countries to evaporate, with Canadian exports dropping from \$152 million in 1978 to \$22 million in 1979 and Iranian oil exports to Canada falling by half.⁶

¹ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 83.

² Canadian external relations were handled by Britain from its creation as a dominion within the British Empire in 1967. Even after Canada achieved full legislative independence following the Statute of Westminster in 1931, Britain continued to represent Canadian interests in many countries around the world, while Canada gradually opened embassies around the world over the next several decades.

³ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵ Amin Saikal, *Iran at the Crossroads* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 28.

⁶ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 100.

The Canadian government quickly got in the bad books of the revolutionaries by stealthily assisting a small group of American embassy staff to escape Iran during the 444 day American embassy hostage crisis of 1979-81. Canadian ambassador Kenneth Taylor had to flee the country to ensure his safety due to his role in the exfiltration of American embassy staff.⁷ The Canadian embassy in Tehran would remain shuttered until 1988, when Canada resumed relations, sending a chargé d'affaires. Ottawa had planned to station an ambassador in Tehran, but this plan was scuttled because of Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* calling for British-Indian author Salman Rushdie's head after the latter's book *Satanic Verses* was accused of blaspheming Muslims.⁸ Relations between Iran and Canada were again tested on April 5th, 1992 when the anti-regime Iranian terrorist group Mujahedin-e Kalq (MeK) stormed the Iranian embassy in Ottawa, and in other western capital cities, vandalizing the building and assaulting staff, including the ambassador.⁹

The official Canadian apology for the embassy attack in Ottawa was accepted by Iran and relations temporarily improved. Bilateral trade soon blossomed in Canada's favour, giving Canada a \$333 million trade surplus in 1993.¹⁰ However, Canada soon found itself caught by an American sanctions push against Iran sparked by that country's support for extremist groups in the Middle East.¹¹ In 1996, Canadian foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy announced an official policy of "controlled engagement" when dealing with Iran. Official interchange was reduced to what would eventually become four topics: human rights issues, the Middle East peace process, international terrorism and nuclear weapons. Other exchanges with Iran were put on hold,

⁷ Iran did not close its embassy in Ottawa, but maintained relations with a chargé d'affaires. Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 40; Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 102.

⁸ A *fatwa* is an Islamic religious edict. Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 107.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹ Robert Bookmiller, "Canada, Iran and 'Controlled Engagement: A new Start with Afghanistan?" *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 17, no. 1(2011): 26.

including plans to initiate direct air links and open new Iranian consulates and an Iranian bank in Canada.¹² Prohibitions were also put, or sustained, on exports of military and dual-use technology.¹³ “Controlled engagement” would remain Canada’s policy through the administrations of Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin and Harper.¹⁴ Despite this policy, slightly improving relations between the United States and Iran following the election of reformer Mohammed Khatami in 1997 created conditions where Ottawa could tone down criticism, loosen restrictions and allow more high level diplomatic exchanges.¹⁵ Trade once again increased, with Canada exporting \$665 million dollars’ worth of goods to Iran in 2000, resulting in a Canadian surplus of \$543 million.¹⁶

In the aftermath of the September 11th, 2001 Al-Qaida attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., Canada acted as an important backchannel between Washington and Tehran, with Canadian Foreign Minister John Manley relaying a message from Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi that Iran “would not oppose military strikes against those responsible, nor would it condemn this US retaliation.”¹⁷ According to Mohsen Milani, the Iranian government went so far as to “br[ing] out maps to try to tell the United States the best (Taliban and Al-Qaida) targets to bomb” in Afghanistan.¹⁸ Strangely, bilateral trade between Iran and Canada plummeted to its lowest level in almost two decades (\$225 million) during this period of diplomatic cooperation.¹⁹ Robert Bookmiller’s explanation

¹² HCD, 6 March 2008, 3772.

¹³ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 116-117.

¹⁴ Following the closure of the Canadian embassy in Tehran and the Iranian embassy in Ottawa in 2012, controlled engagement would remain in name only, since government-to-government contact was severed.

¹⁵ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 40; Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 117-119.

¹⁶ One of Iran’s principal imports from Canada was wheat. Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 119.

¹⁷ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 120; Bookmiller, “Canada, Iran and ‘Controlled Engagement,’” 26

¹⁸ Quoted in Mohsen Milani, "Iran's Policy towards Afghanistan," *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2 (2006): 247.

¹⁹ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 124.

for this drop was increasing regional instability, high commodity prices and greater self-sufficiency in Iran's agricultural sector.²⁰

Canadian ties with Iran became gravely harmed in 2003 by two factors: the first was the confirmation by the IAEA that Iran had been hiding important aspects of its nuclear program; the second was the brutal torture, rape and murder of Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi after she was caught photographing a protest in Iran.²¹ The Iranian government refuses to recognize dual citizens and avoided a transparent investigation into Kazemi's death, aggravating her family and embittering Canada's relationship with that country. In a further insult to her family, the Iranian government refused to repatriate her body to Canada.²² Prime Minister Paul Martin, encouraged by calls for strong action by the Conservatives and others, reacted to Kazemi's murder by further restricting "controlled engagement" to dealing with consular cases and human rights and withdrawing the Canadian ambassador from Tehran.²³ Martin announced that the additional restrictions would not be lifted until Iran launched an open and independent investigation into Kazemi's murder.²⁴ As a result of the Kazemi case, the Martin administration started what became an annual Canadian tradition: adopting a United Nations General Assembly motion criticizing Iran's human rights record. Although, after a four month vacancy, Canada returned an ambassador to Tehran, a war of words about Kazemi continued between the Canadian and Iranian governments. The Iranians warned the new ambassador not to meddle in its affairs, and Canadian Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew's office

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 162; Glenn Johnson, "Iran orders Canada's ambassador out of Tehran," *National Post*, December 4, 2007. <http://www.nationalpost.com/iran+orders+canada+ambassador+tehran/141662/story.html>; Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs *Performance Report 2004-2005*; Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 84; HCD, 17 October 2012, 11089.

²² Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 124.

²³ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 40.

²⁴ Ibid., 40.

responded by saying Canada was still awaiting answers about its citizen's death.²⁵ As leader of the opposition, Stephen Harper clearly disagreed with the Martin government's actions, asking Parliament on April 4th, 2005, "What kind of callous, spineless government re-establish[es] normal diplomatic relations with that kind of regime?"²⁶ The response from Pettigrew was that Canada needed an ambassador in Tehran to express Canada's views on the matter – a position that Harper would not adopt when tensions between Iran and his administration escalated.²⁷

The relationship between the two nations never recovered during the Martin administration, and worsened after the election of Stephen Harper in January 2006. Even in the Harper era, from 2006 to 2015, the Kazemi case remained an irritant in the two countries' relationship and was mentioned regularly in Canadian parliamentary debates about Iran.

Over the course of the decade, the working relationship between Canada and Iran in Afghanistan began to decline, perhaps as a result of the general decline in relations described above, or perhaps due to Iran's increasingly disruptive role in the country. Tehran initially accepted the NATO invasion of Afghanistan. Iran's government was happy to have the Taliban deposed.²⁸ Iran never raised the issue of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan with Canadian diplomats.²⁹ In the early years of the NATO occupation of Afghanistan, Iran was very receptive in assisting reconstruction in Afghanistan, especially in the western region of Herat Province, and wanted to work with NATO countries to reduce drug trafficking and support Afghan refugees.³⁰ Tehran continued to cooperate with the United States and NATO in Afghanistan,

²⁵ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 128.

²⁶ HCD, 4 April 2005, 4623.

²⁷ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 128.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

³⁰ Bookmiller, "Canada, Iran and 'Controlled Engagement'," 24, 30-33.

even after American President George W. Bush declared Iran to be part of an “Axis of Evil” in 2002.

Cooperation fell apart after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. Iran now saw itself as encircled by its arch enemy, the United States of America, and began to oppose the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan.³¹ At some point, it appears that Iran started arming its former enemy- the Taliban, whose insurgency picked up in intensity through the decade, especially in the southern and eastern areas of Afghanistan. On Christmas Day 2007, Defense Minister Peter MacKay became the first Canadian government minister to publicly accuse Iran of supporting the Taliban with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in a speech to Canadian soldiers in Kandahar Province in south-eastern Afghanistan.³² Royal Military College professor Sean Maloney remarked that he had “constantly” come across Iranian-made rocket propelled grenades and IED detonators on his previous 11 deployments to Afghanistan between 2003 and 2011.³³ Former Canadian army interpreter Ahmadshah Malgarai reported to the Special Parliamentary Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan on April 14th, 2010, that two Taliban commanders who were surrendering to his unit told him that Iranian intelligence had hacked Canadian computers.³⁴ Robert Bookmiller hypothesizes that Iran was hedging its bets due to the unstable condition of Afghanistan’s (Western and Iran-supported) central government, and that Iran wanted to keep Western military forces bogged down as a form of self-protection, due to Iran’s uneasiness with Western forces on its border which could potentially be used against

³¹ Harpviken Berg, Kristian and Shahbanou Tadbakhsh, *A Rock Between Hard Places: Afghanistan as an Arena of Regional Insecurity* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 125; Bookmiller, “Canada, Iran and ‘Controlled Engagement’,” 31.

³² “MacKay says Iran giving weapons to Taliban,” *CBC News*, December 25, 2007, World. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/mackay-says-iran-giving-weapons-to-taliban-1.649199>.

³³ Quoted in Jean-Christophe Boucher and Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of War: Canada’s Afghanistan Mission, 2001-14* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 237.

³⁴ Canada, Number 005, 3rd Session, 40th Parliament, *Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan*, 14 April 2010, <http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/40-3/AFGH/meeting-5/evidence>.

it.³⁵ Canada did indeed become bogged down in Kandahar province. Iranian Vice-President Esfandiar Mashaei welcomed Canada setting a December 2011 withdrawal date from its military mission in Afghanistan, calling it “good news.”³⁶ The end of Canada’s military mission in Iran may have some connection to Canada shuttering its embassy in Tehran in September 2012: a direct channel was no longer needed between the countries, and Iran’s role in Afghanistan would have further contributed to an increased distaste for Iran within the Canadian government.

When the Harper government took power in 2006, it followed the restrictive “controlled engagement” policy already in place. But increasing international tensions surrounding the motives that lay behind Iran’s nuclear program would cause Canada to clash with Iran more in the future, since Canada had traditionally taken strong stances against nuclear weapons programs, such as the one it suspected Iran was developing.

Chapter 2: Iran’s Nuclear Program and Threats towards Israel

Iran’s nuclear program originated in the aftermath of the 1973 oil shock, when oil prices were dramatically increased by Arab oil exporters aiming to punish western support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War. As a signatory to the NPT, Iran is entitled to operate a civilian nuclear program under safeguards from the IAEA. Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi sought assistance with technological training and the acquisition of nuclear technology and uranium from the United States, Canada, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, India and several African countries.³⁷ The Shah’s original plan was to have 20 nuclear power plants built over a

³⁵ Bookmiller, “Canada, Iran and ‘Controlled Engagement’,” 24-25.

³⁶ Quoted in Mike Blanchfield and Meagen Fitzpatrick, “Canada's Afghan role hurts reputation: Iranian vice-president,” *Ottawa Citizen*, March 13, 2009. <https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/academic/>.

³⁷ Seline Høiseth, “Atomic Ayatollahs: Explaining Iran’s Post-Revolutionary Nuclear Path,” *International Politics* 52, no. 5 (2015): 525.

twenty year time-span to provide the country with 23,000 megawatts of electricity.³⁸ To gain international confidence, Tehran publically forsook nuclear weapons, created the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in 1974 and entered into an additional safeguards agreement with the IAEA.³⁹ The Shah successfully signed deals to acquire nuclear technology from the United States, France and West Germany over the next four years. Originally an understanding was in place to acquire reactors from Canada; however, the Iranians rejected Canada's rules surrounding its nuclear technology and uranium exports, which were significantly tightened following India's nuclear test in May 1974.⁴⁰ Iran instead went to West Germany for assistance in building the nuclear power plant at Bushehr.⁴¹

The January 1979 Iranian Revolution forced the Shah to abdicate the throne and flee the country. In the ensuing years, power was consolidated under Shia cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who reshaped the country as an Islamic republic. Khomeini sidelined the nuclear project proclaiming that atomic weaponry was against the "spirit of Islam," and distancing himself from the Shah's mega projects.⁴² Additionally, the partially completed nuclear power station at Bushehr was damaged multiple times by Iraqi bombers during the course of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988. In 1986, the Iranian government considered re-building its nuclear power plant at Bushehr, but the West Germans, under American pressure, refused to restart construction.⁴³ After Khomeini's death in 1989, the Iranian government started rebuilding the Bushehr nuclear power plant at with Russian and Chinese assistance. Russia installed an energy system which could only use specially made Russian uranium, negating any need for Iran to

³⁸ Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 148.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

⁴² Saikal, *Iran at the Crossroads*, 85.

⁴³ Shahram Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 7.

enrich its own uranium.⁴⁴ At the same time, Iran started securing nuclear equipment on the black market using Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan's clandestine network, indicating that Iran wanted to enrich its own uranium.⁴⁵ Iran eventually used its networking knowledge to procure centrifuge parts, pressure transducers and microchips from Canada.⁴⁶ George Webb, head of Canada Border Services Agency's Counter Proliferation Section, said these products were for the Iranian nuclear program.⁴⁷ Geoffrey Forden, of the MIT Science, Technology and Global Security Working Group, said Iran's intention was to reverse engineer technology acquired abroad to allow themselves to produce these products.⁴⁸

Under the reformist government of President Mohammed Khatami, elected in 1997, Iran covertly accelerated its nuclear program. According to nuclear policy expert Shahram Chubin, the administration wanted to finish construction quickly and present the program as a *fait accompli*.⁴⁹ However, in 2002, two undeclared nuclear sites, an underground uranium enrichment site at Natanz and a heavy water facility to make plutonium at Arak, were exposed by an exiled dissident group called the National Council of Resistance of Iran.⁵⁰ Both sites raised the suspicion of Iran's neighbours and Western powers that Iran was planning on constructing

⁴⁴ Amir Taheri, *The Persian Night: Iran under the Khomeinist Revolution* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), 249.

⁴⁵ Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 7; Høiseth, "Atomic Ayatollahs," 527.

⁴⁶ Pressure transducers can be used in nuclear power plants, but are needed to produce nuclear weapons. The microchips were suspected of being for guidance systems. Stewart Bell, "Iran getting some of its nuclear materials in Canada: officials; Iranians running a sophisticated procurement operation that sources components in Canada and ships them through third countries to Iran," *Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 2009. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 10.

⁵⁰ The National Council of Resistance in Iran is closely linked to the Mujahedin-e Kalq (MeK), which is considered a terrorist group by Iran and was considered a terrorist group in Canada until December 2012. Mark Fitzpatrick, "Can Iran's Nuclear Capability Be Kept Latent?" *Survival* 49, no.1 (2007): 34; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 8; Saikal, *Iran at the Crossroads*, 85.

nuclear weapons: if Iran had no plutonium power plants, why did it need to make plutonium, other than for military purposes?⁵¹

On June 5th, 2003, IAEA Director General Mohammed el-Baradei presented a report to the IAEA's board of governors revealing that Iran had secret workshops and materials stockpiled in facilities which had not been declared to the IAEA, and concluded that there was "a strong suspicion" Iran was trying to conceal weapons activities.⁵² Under international pressure in the tense global atmosphere following American President George W. Bush's January 2002 "Axis of Evil" speech, Khatami's government moved to prove that the nuclear program was peaceful.⁵³ Iran allowed International Atomic Energy Association inspectors to its nuclear sites and temporarily froze nuclear-related construction. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei also issued a *fatwa* forbidding nuclear weapons. In October 2003, Iran, led by chief negotiator Hassan Rouhani, entered into talks with France, Germany and Britain (the E3) regarding its nuclear program. President Khatami also made overtures towards the Americans to address their concerns, but these were not met with a positive response.⁵⁴ The E3 negotiations led to Iran signing the additional protocol to the NPT, which allowed the IAEA more widespread access on their inspections. These inspections revealed Iran's 164-centrifuge cascade at Natanz, which demonstrated its ability to enrich uranium to reactor-grade fuel levels (3.5-5%).⁵⁵

The election of belligerent nationalist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president of Iran in 2005 caused uncertainty in the multilateral nuclear negotiations. Ahmadinejad ran his campaign

⁵¹ Taheri, *The Persian Night*, 249.

⁵² Quoted in Kenneth Timmerman, *Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005), 260; Fitzpatrick, "Can Iran's Nuclear Capability Be Kept Latent?" 34.

⁵³ In his "Axis of Evil" speech, Bush declared Iran, Iraq and North Korea to be menacing international sponsors of terror.

⁵⁴ Saikal, *Iran at the Crossroads*, 62.

⁵⁵ Fitzpatrick, "Can Iran's Nuclear Capability Be Kept Latent?" 35-37.

partly on the platform that Iran had made too many concessions to the IAEA and the West.⁵⁶

Negotiations were thrown into stasis in February 2006. The IAEA referred Iran's nuclear activity to the UN Security Council, causing Iran to suspend its additional IAEA protocol.⁵⁷

The big question facing analysts and intelligence agencies alike is: what is the real purpose of Iran's nuclear program? The program is being sold in Iran as a peaceful indigenous power project: Iranians are told they will benefit from the project by diversifying their energy sources and creating advanced technology.⁵⁸ The Iranian nuclear program appeals strongly to modern Iranian nationalism. Successive Iranian governments have framed the nuclear program as Iran's right, both in light of Iran's view of themselves as a historic power in the Middle East, and of their understanding of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's right to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program.⁵⁹ Ahmadinejad would often accuse Western "imperialist powers" of implementing a "nuclear apartheid" to deprive Iran of technology in order to hold the country back, while ignoring the nuclear programs of non-NPT signees India, Pakistan and Israel.⁶⁰ His government would trumpet domestic advances in nuclear technology as proof that Iran was becoming an advanced and self-sufficient country.⁶¹ Hassan Rouhani expressed it was Iran's right to control the entire nuclear fuel cycle rather than being reliant on other countries to import enriched uranium.⁶² According to surveys, domestic support for the nuclear program has been very high, with 80% saying that Iran had the right to generate nuclear power in 2005 and 91%

⁵⁶ Adam Tarock, "Iran's Nuclear Programme and the West," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2006): 659.

⁵⁷ Fitzpatrick, "Can Iran's Nuclear Capability Be Kept Latent?" 36.

⁵⁸ Ferry de Kerckove, *Canada and Iran: Looking Beyond the Present* (Calgary: Canadian Defense and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2012), 3; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 17.

⁵⁹ Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007), 76-77; Uriel Abulof, "Nuclear Diversion Theory and Legitimacy Crisis: The Case of Iran," *Politics and Policy* 41, no. 5 (2013): 707; Bowen, Moran and Esfandiary, *Living on the Edge*, 69; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 15.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Tarock, "Iran's Nuclear Programme and the West," 659; Bowen, Moran and Esfandiary, *Living on the Edge*, 67.

⁶¹ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Iran: Stuck in Transition* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 211; Chubin, *Iran's Nuclear Ambitions*, 25, 27.

⁶² Høiseth, "Atomic Ayatollahs," 532.

affirming a nuclear program was important in 2006.⁶³ The nuclear program has become such an essential part of national politics that Rouhani said any government that “wishes to stop uranium enrichment will fall.”⁶⁴ Thus the nuclear program has become an important part of the legitimacy of the government of the Islamic Republic.

Foreign analysts and intelligence agencies have long debated whether the Iranians intend to build a nuclear weapon or whether they want to simply build the infrastructure which gives them that capacity. The many years of clandestine acquisition of dual-use technology, the construction of secret enrichment facilities, violations of nuclear safeguard agreements, the desire to control all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, and the refusal to step back during the eight years of Ahmadinejad’s presidency despite repeated rounds of increasingly harsh sanctions have contributed to the suspicions many have about the intent of Iran’s nuclear program.⁶⁵ In October 2013, Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird commented to Parliament that the Iranian nuclear program was very suspicious because it was not necessary “to manufacture medical isotopes under 300 metres of rock.”⁶⁶ According to Wyn Bowen, Matthew Moran and Dina Esfandiary, the Iranian nuclear program has gone beyond what “it would strictly require for a civil nuclear programme based on energy production and scientific research.”⁶⁷ The most common assessment was that there had been no final decision by Iran’s leaders about whether to weaponize their nuclear program or not, but they were practicing “nuclear hedging,” meaning that they want to build up nuclear infrastructure, so that if they needed to, a nuclear weapon could be constructed

⁶³ C. Christine Fair and Stephen M. Shellman, “Determinants of Popular Support for Iran’s Nuclear Program: Insights from a Nationally Representative Survey,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 29, no.3 (2008): 542; Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, 28.

⁶⁴ Bowen, Moran and Esfandiary, *Living on the Edge*, 84; Quoted in Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, 40.

⁶⁵ Dual-use nuclear technology can be used for either civilian or military nuclear programs. Høiseith, “Atomic Ayatollahs,” 527.

⁶⁶ HCD, 25 October 2013, 414.

⁶⁷ Bowen, Moran and Esfandiary, *Living on the Edge*, 6.

in a short amount of time.⁶⁸ Both the 2011-2013 and 2013-2014 reports by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) indicated that Iran “is widely believed to be seeking the capability to produce nuclear weapons,” which could be interpreted either that CSIS thinks Iran is practicing nuclear hedging or that it wants to build weapons.⁶⁹ Seline Høiseth offers a different assessment of Iran’s suspicious behaviour, saying that Iran had to pursue the clandestine path to nuclear self-sufficiency because isolation from international nuclear markets forced them to acquire nuclear materials on the black market and security concerns required Iran to control all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle.⁷⁰ Still, she did not explain Iran’s need for a heavy water plant.

Throughout its history, leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran have made menacing comments towards Israel. Ever since the Islamic Revolution, Israeli-Iranian relations have been frosty. Israel was labelled “Little Satan” to America’s “Great Satan” by Ayatollah Khomeini, who made regular denunciations of the Jewish state, one of his most famous threats being: “This regime that is occupying Qods (Jerusalem) must be eliminated from the pages of history.”⁷¹ Khomeini’s successor as Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, continued to use similar rhetoric,

⁶⁸ Lauren Cardinal, “Domestic Factors in the Iranian Nuclear Agreement: Canadian Engagement Strategies with Iran.” *CDA Institute*, no.30 (March 2016): 3; Matthew Moran and Christopher Hobbs, “The Iranian nuclear dilemma: light at the end of the tunnel?,” *Defense & Security Analysis* 28, no. 3 (2012): 208; Bowen, Moran and Esfandiary, *Living on the Edge*, 7, 16; Chubin, *Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions*, 6; Fitzpatrick, “Can Iran’s Nuclear Capability Be Kept Latent?” 33; Jeremy Kinsman, “U.S. and Iran: A diplomatic lesson for Canada,” *OpenCanada.Org*, May 20, 2015, Iran, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/u-s-and-iran-a-diplomatic-lesson-for-canada/>.

⁶⁹ Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Services, *Public Report*, 2011-2013, 21; Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Services, *Public Report*, 2013-2014, 28.

⁷⁰ Høiseth, “Atomic Ayatollahs,” 534-536.

⁷¹ Michael Rydelnik, *Understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict: What the Headlines Haven't Told You* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 232; Quoted in Robert Mackey, “Israeli Minister Agrees Ahmadinejad Never Said Israel ‘Must Be Wiped Off the Map’,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2012. <https://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/israeli-minister-agrees-ahmadinejad-never-said-israel-must-be-wiped-off-the-map/>; Jonathan Steele, “If Iran is ready to talk, the US must do so unconditionally,” *The Guardian*, June 2, 2006, Opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/jun/02/comment.usa>; Louis Charbonneau, “In New York, defiant Ahmadinejad says Israel will be ‘eliminated’,” Reuters, September 24, 2012, World News. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-assembly-ahmadinejad/in-new-york-defiant-ahmadinejad-says-israel-will-be-eliminated-idUSBRE88N0HF20120924>.

calling Israel a “‘cancerous tumour’ ... that should be cut off.”⁷² After the election of President Ahmadinejad, these comments appear to have increased in frequency and magnitude. Coupled with fears that Iran’s nuclear program was creating a weapon, his comments about Israel often caused consternation among Canadian politicians, provoking them into making hostile statements towards Iran. Ahmadinejad’s most famous and provocative statement about Israel, which caused alarm for Canadian Parliamentarians of all parties, was his repetition of Khomeini’s threat to eliminate Israel “from the pages of history,” frequently mistranslated and misquoted as “wipe Israel off the map.”⁷³ Despite the negligible difference in meaning that this translation error had, rather than a proximal threat of violence, it was a threat to destroy Israeli civilization. The latter phrase has been used by the Iranian government: an English language banner draped on a building housing reserve forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards saying “Israel should be wiped out of the face of the world” was captured in a photo by Joshua Teitelbaum of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.⁷⁴ Karim Sadjadpour, an Iranian specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace confirmed that these banners were put in place elsewhere in Iran as well.⁷⁵ Mount Royal Liberal MP Irwin Cotler, a prominent critic of the Iranian regime in parliament, reported that similar banners were draped on a Shahab 3 ballistic missile during a parade.⁷⁶ These threats to Israel, along with the Holocaust denial conference

⁷² Quoted in Ashfaqur Rahman, “NAM Summit: Diplomatic boost for Iran,” *The Daily Star*, September 2, 2012, Sunday Pouch. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-247974>; Canada, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, *Ahmadinejad’s Iran: A Threat to Peace, Human Rights and International Law*, December, 2010, 48; Irwin Cotler, “Irwin Cotler: Iran Represents a Critical Mass of Threat,” *OpenCanada.Org*, April 4, 2012, In Depth. <https://www.opencanada.org/features/irwin-cotler-iran-represents-a-critical-mass-of-threat/>; Mackey, “Israeli Minister Agrees Ahmadinejad Never Said Israel ‘Must Be Wiped Off the Map’.”

⁷³ Steele, “If Iran is ready to talk, the US must do so unconditionally”; Mackey, “Israeli Minister Agrees Ahmadinejad Never Said Israel ‘Must Be Wiped Off the Map’.”

⁷⁴ Mackey, “Israeli Minister Agrees Ahmadinejad Never Said Israel ‘Must Be Wiped Off the Map’.”

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Cotler is a former lawyer, law professor, director of the McGill University Human Rights Program and justice minister under the Martin administration. Shahab 3 missiles are capable of striking Israel according to the Missile

Ahmadinejad's government hosted, did serious harm to Iran's image in the Canadian Parliament and brought more attention to Iran's nuclear program and the risk it posed to Israel specifically, and world peace in general.⁷⁷

It is debatable how much threat a nuclear-armed Iran would actually pose to Israel and its other neighbours. On one hand, the Islamic Republic's state religion, Twelver Shia Islam, has apocalyptic aspects to its theology; on the other hand, since the early days of the revolution, Iran's leaders have shown much more interest on self-preservation than on martyrdom.⁷⁸ Despite this, Lauren Cardinal says the Harper government's stances on Iran were "based on an assumption of the regime's irrationality."⁷⁹ Iran has rarely been directly aggressive towards other countries, preferring to delegate offensive military tasks to proxy militias and terrorist groups. For example, Iran has armed and funded Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, both of which have participated in direct attacks against Israel. However, in the time period of this paper, Iran had never attacked Israel directly using its own forces. In addition, Iran's friendships and alliances have often been based on realpolitik and not just ideology: for instance, it has maintained close relations with secular, Alawite led Syria, anti-religious North Korea, and Christian Armenia, in addition to Shia allies in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon.⁸⁰ Iran's ballistic missile program has caused anxiety both to Israel and other Middle Eastern states, and it has

Defense Project, "Missiles of Iran," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 14, 2018, last modified June 15, 2018. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/iran/>; HCD, 14 May 2012, 8044.

⁷⁷ HCD, 6 April 2006, 116; 5 May 2006, 996; 14 May 2007, 9435; 15 May 2007, 9514; 5 February 2008, 2635, 2636, 2637; 28 May 2008, 6168; 14 May 2012, 8044; 26 February 2015, 11737.

⁷⁸ Twelver Shi'ism says that when the twelfth imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, returns, he will usher in the apocalypse. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed to be in contact with the Mahdi at one point during his presidency. Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009), xxiv; Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 18; Taheri, *The Persian Night*, 7; Roland Paris, "Stephen Harper's Worrying Words on Iran." *OpenCanada.Org*, January 21, 2012, In Depth. https://www.opencanada.org/features/harper_iran/; Canada, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, *Ahmadinejad's Iran*, 57.

⁷⁹ Cardinal, "Domestic Factors in the Iranian Nuclear Agreement," 4.

⁸⁰ Alawites are an offshoot of Shia Islam. Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, *Evolving Iran: An Introduction to Politics and Problems in the Islamic Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 157-158.

produced missiles capable of striking Israel such as the Shahab 3.⁸¹ If Iran could fit a nuclear armament onto one of these missiles, it would increase the threat Iran posed to Israel. Due to Iran's rhetoric and Israel's history of being targeted by neighbouring countries, the thought of a potential Iranian nuclear bomb makes Israelis very anxious. According to Hillary Mann Leverett et al., there was a widespread belief in Israel near the end of the decade of the 2000s that it was in a moment similar to that faced by the Allies in 1939; in 2009, just over half of Israeli Jews supported attacking Iran "immediately."⁸²

The secretive and opaque nature of the Iranian nuclear program elicited the suspicions of Harper and Parliament, especially due to his assumption that the Iranian government was not a rational actor. Even if the Iranian government is to be taken at its word that its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes, its potential to create weapons was enough to cause fear and a strong reaction from the Canadian government, especially due to Iran's history of threats against Israel, as will be shown later in the paper.

Chapter 3: The History of Canada's External Nuclear Policies

Canada has a very long history of involvement with nuclear technology and weaponry. Canada was part of the original nuclear triad, along with the United States and Great Britain, which worked together on the Manhattan Project to create the first atomic bombs during the Second World War.⁸³ After the Allied victory in the war, Canada continued to provide uranium to the Americans and then to the British for their nuclear weapons programs.⁸⁴ By the end of the

⁸¹ Missile Defense Project, "Missiles of Iran."

⁸² Hillary Mann Leverett, Martin Indyk, Ian Lustick and Paul Pillar, "U.S. Policies toward Israel and Iran: What are the Linkages," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 3 (Fall 2010):7.

⁸³ Atomic bombs may be composed of either highly enriched uranium or plutonium; both types were produced by the Manhattan Project.

⁸⁴ Bill Robinson, *Canada and Nuclear Weapons: Canadian Policies Related to, and Connections to, Nuclear Weapons* (Waterloo, Ont.: Project Ploughshares, 2002), 7.

1950s, uranium had become Canada's fourth most valuable export, worth \$300 million per year.⁸⁵

Following World War Two, Canada quickly embarked on its own nuclear research and energy program; however, this program was not military in nature.⁸⁶ Canada's focus was to use its scientific head start and vast uranium resources to become an important global player in nuclear power plant production and uranium exports. In 1956, Canada made its first nuclear export, a gift to India. The \$9.5 million Canada-India-United States Reactor (CIRUS) was constructed on the promise of peaceful use. Since the IAEA had not yet been founded, Canada had to rely on India's pledge of trust that it would not use plutonium created by CIRUS to create a weapon.⁸⁷ Over time, however, the plutonium accumulated by CIRUS, and the knowledge acquired by Canadian and American trained Indian scientists and engineers would help that country reach nuclear break-out capacity.⁸⁸

During Louis St. Laurent's Liberal administration (1948-1957), Canada was active in international nuclear test ban negotiations. Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson pushed for a limited, rather than a total nuclear test ban in multilateral negotiations to appease Canada's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies Britain and the United States and to avoid "foreclos[ing] the possibility of Canada developing and producing nuclear weapons."⁸⁹ John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government, elected in 1957, became

⁸⁵ Ron Finch, *Exporting Danger: A History of the Canadian Nuclear Energy Export Programme* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), 77; T.V. Paul, *Power versus Prudence: Why Nations Forgo Nuclear Weapons* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 64.

⁸⁶ Michael Crawford Urban, "The Curious Tale of the Dog that did not Bark: Explaining Canada's Non-Acquisition of an Independent Nuclear Arsenal, 1945-1957," *International Journal* 69, no. 3 (2014): 309.

⁸⁷ The IAEA was established in 1957. Douglas Shaw, "Lessons of Restraint: How Canada Helps Explain and Strengthen the Non-Proliferation Norm," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 66, no. 5 (2010): 4; Ross Campbell, "Canadian Nuclear Export Policy Toward Developing Countries," *Asian Perspective* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 4.

⁸⁸ Duane Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 43.

⁸⁹ Joseph Levitt, *Pearson and Canada's Role in Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control Negotiations, 1945-1957* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 232.

embroiled in a debate about whether or not Canada should accept American nuclear arms for its forces stationed with NATO in Europe and with NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command) at home. Initially, accepting nuclear weapons did not worry Diefenbaker; he thought a NATO stockpile of nuclear weapons would serve as a useful deterrent against potential Soviet aggression, so he went about purchasing nuclear delivery mechanisms including missiles and airplanes.⁹⁰

The Diefenbaker government changed course in international nuclear arms control negotiations after Howard Green became Secretary of State for External Affairs in 1959. Green and his deputy, Norman Robertson, were both staunch opponents of nuclear weapons. At the United Nations, Green's first bill was passive: he motioned to study the effects of fallout from nuclear tests. Next, he broke with "Western solidarity" and supported Morocco's resolution to call on Canada's NATO ally France to refrain from making nuclear tests.⁹¹ In December 1960, Green and Diefenbaker supported an Irish resolution for putting voluntary restrictions on the spread of nuclear weapons, even though the Canadian defense establishment was working out the details of equipping itself with these weapons.⁹² Canada's allies abstained from that vote. Green's work at the UN moved public opinion in Canada against nuclear weapons, giving him Diefenbaker's ear and enough weight in Cabinet to delay Canada's acquisition of atomic weapons; he insisted that Canada needed to back words with actions if it were to have the moral

⁹⁰ Erika Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb: Canadian Defenders Confront Critics* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 102.

⁹¹ France was developing nuclear weapons and showed signs of preparing for its first explosion. Daniel Heidt, "I think that would be the end of Canada' Howard Green, the Nuclear Test Ban, and Interest-Based Foreign Policy, 1946–1963," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 42, no. 3 (2012): 353.

⁹² Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb*, 113-4.

authority it needed to move farther against nuclear weapons.⁹³ On January 1st, 1963, Green successfully passed a UN resolution for a nuclear test moratorium.⁹⁴

Despite Canada's increasingly strong stance against nuclear weaponry during the Diefenbaker administration, the government was not against the spread of nuclear energy projects and was promoting the sale of its civil nuclear products. In 1959, Canadian Westinghouse sold a 125 megawatt nuclear power reactor to Pakistan (called KANUPP) on the condition that it be used for "peaceful purposes only"; it took a decade for Pakistan to agree to IAEA safeguards.⁹⁵ Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) started preparing a sale of a CANDU reactor to India. CANDU reactors were designed to be to be safe and avoid proliferating nuclear weapons; however, they had several ways that allowed them to provide materials for the production of nuclear weapons.⁹⁶

In February 1963, John Diefenbaker's minority government collapsed due to internal divisions after the prime minister announced he would not accept American nuclear arms for the Canadian military.⁹⁷ Canadian public opinion had swung firmly behind the idea of acquiring American nuclear weapons following Canada's delayed and limited support for the Americans during October 1962's Cuban Missile Crisis.⁹⁸ Moreover, Diefenbaker's breach with John F. Kennedy's administration opened him up to a public rebuke from Washington for not accepting American nuclear weapons.

⁹³ Heidt, "I think that would be the end of Canada'," 358-60.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁹⁵ Gordon Edwards, "Canada's Nuclear Industry and the Myth of the Peaceful Atom," in *Canada and the Nuclear Arms Race*, ed. Ernie Regehr and Simon Rosenblum (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1983), 127, 134; Campbell, "Canadian Nuclear Export Policy Toward Developing Countries," 5.

⁹⁶ For example, CANDU reactors produced plutonium. Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 46.

⁹⁷ For a detailed account of this event, see John Saywell, *Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs, 1963* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 182-201; Mark Eaton, "Canadian Editorial Opinion and the 1963 Nuclear Weapon Acquisition Debate," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 35, no. 4 (2005): 647.

⁹⁸ Mark Eaton, "The Liberal and Conservative Internationalist Divide: Societal Responses to Canada's Transatlantic Nuclear Commitments," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2017): 647; Paul, *Power versus Prudence*, 66.

In an about-face from his previous position, Liberal leader Lester Pearson promised to accept American nuclear weapons. This promise, among others, helped the Grits defeat the Tories in the April 1963 federal election. The new Liberal government armed itself with American nuclear weapons and finalized Canada's first CANDU reactor sale to India. Still, his administration was becoming increasingly concerned about nuclear proliferation. On June 3rd, 1965, the Prime Minister's Office announced a review of its uranium export policy in support of IAEA safeguards and peaceful use. Canadian intelligence that Israel was clandestinely purchasing yellowcake uranium from Argentina failed to stop that country's nuclear weapons program because Britain and the United States did not act quickly enough on the intelligence to pressure Israel into revealing its intentions before it had reached the nuclear break-out point.⁹⁹

Lester Pearson's successor Pierre Trudeau, who became Prime Minister in 1968, reversed course on Canada's nuclear weapons during his long tenure as Prime Minister (1968-1979, 1980-1984), returning them all to the United States by the time of his retirement in 1984. He strongly promoted safeguards against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while supporting the export of Canadian uranium and nuclear technology. Canada played a significant role in the crafting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and was one of the original eighty states that signed it in September 1968.¹⁰⁰ An October 1968 External Affairs release stated that the NPT was important for international stability and Canadian nuclear commerce.¹⁰¹ Canadian External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp stated that he hoped that Canada, as a "near-nuclear" signatory, would show faith in the treaty and encourage others to join.¹⁰² Building on the momentum created by the NPT,

⁹⁹ William Burr and Avner Cohen, "Israel's Quest for Yellowcake: The Secret Argentina-Israel Connection 1963-1966," *The Wilson Center*, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/israels-quest-for-yellowcake-the-secret-argentina-israel-connection-1963-1966> (accessed 7 May, 2019).

¹⁰⁰ Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 53.

¹⁰¹ External Affairs, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: the Canadian Position," October 1968, in Arthur Blanchette, ed. *Canadian Foreign Policy 1966-1976: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Ottawa: Carleton Library, 1980), 18.

¹⁰² Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 53.

Canadian ambassador to the UN Security Council George Ignatieff made a push to phase out tests by the existing nuclear powers, proposing a limited underground test ban; however, the Soviet Union blocked this initiative.¹⁰³

India's detonation of Smiling Buddha on May 17th, 1974, in what it deemed to be a "peaceful nuclear explosion" using Canadian-provided nuclear facilities and know-how, jolted Canadian policy makers into insisting on unconditional full nuclear safeguards by all countries with whom Canada conducted nuclear business.¹⁰⁴ Canada stopped nuclear co-operation with both India and Pakistan after the South Asian countries refused to accept additional safeguards and assurances of peaceful use for the reactors Canada had sold them.¹⁰⁵ Canada managed to push both Argentina and Romania to accept additional IAEA inspections and safeguards for their Canadian-bought nuclear power plants; however, American assistance was needed to pressure the Republic of China (Taiwan) and South Korea to accept these additional safeguards on their reactors.¹⁰⁶ To deal with security issues and enforce nuclear safeguards, Canada supported the formation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 1975 with the other nuclear technology exporting nations: France, Great Britain, Japan, West Germany, the US and the USSR. The NSG

¹⁰³ Colin Gray, *Canadian Defence Priorities: A Question of Relevance* (Vancouver: Clarke, Irwing and Co. Ltd., 1972), 114.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Doern, Arslan Dorman and Robert Morrison, "Precarious Opportunity: Canada's Changing Nuclear Energy Policies and Institutional Choices," in *Canadian Nuclear Energy Policy: Changing Ideas, Institutions, and Interests*, ed. by Bruce Doern, Arslan Dorman and Robert Morrison (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 20; Anita Singh, "The India-Canada Civilian Nuclear Deal: Implications for Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 65, no. 1 (2009): 236; Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 128, 201; Shaw, "Lessons of Restraint," 49.

¹⁰⁵ Allan MacEachen, "Nuclear Relations with India, Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan MacEachen," May 18, 1976, in Arthur Blanchette, ed. *Canadian Foreign Policy 1966-1976: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Ottawa: Carleton Library, 1980), 27-29; Edwards, "Canada's Nuclear Industry and the Myth of the Peaceful Atom," 134.

¹⁰⁶ Se Young Jang, "Bringing Seoul into the Non-proliferation Regime: The Effect of ROK-Canada Reactor Deals on South Korea's Ratification of the NPT," *Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars*, Working paper (September 2017): iv; James Keeley, "Canadian Nuclear Export Policy and the Problems of Proliferation," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 6, no. 4 (Autumn, 1980): 619; Shaw, "Lessons of Restraint," 49; Edwards, "Canada's Nuclear Industry and the Myth of the Peaceful Atom," 136; Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 152.

agreed to withhold equipment sales unless the buyer agreed to strict safeguards against weapons production.¹⁰⁷

Pierre Trudeau took personal measures to combat the spread of nuclear weapons technology. In a speech at the UN General Assembly's First Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD I) on May 26th, 1978, Trudeau pitched "arresting the dynamic of the nuclear arms race... by a strategy of suffocation," including a complete ban on nuclear tests and nuclear bomb delivery vehicle development.¹⁰⁸ The speech was well received both in Canada and internationally.¹⁰⁹ According to Paul Meyer, the most lasting effect of Trudeau's speech was that it spurred the Canadian bureaucracy to play a more active role in international arms control.¹¹⁰

Despite Canada's actions and rhetoric, international tension and the nuclear arms race intensified in the early 1980s. Trudeau spent the final six months prior to his retirement on June 30th, 1984, on a frantic but unsuccessful peace initiative, visiting 15 NATO and Warsaw Pact capitals.¹¹¹ Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney, winner of the 1984 election, continued the Trudeau government's enthusiastic support for nuclear arms control and proliferation safeguards. His government tried to push the Americans to honour previous arms control treaties they had signed with the Soviets.¹¹² It also threatened to end any economic cooperation with non-signatories of the NPT, an action targeting India more specifically than the other non-signees:

¹⁰⁷ Keeley, "Canadian Nuclear Export Policy and the Problems of Proliferation," 623.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Paul Meyer, "Pierre Trudeau and the 'Suffocation' of the Nuclear Arms Race," *International Journal* 71, no. 3 (2016): 394, 401, 403; Pauline Jewett, "Suffocation" of the Arms Race: Federal Policy 1978-82," in *Canada and the Nuclear Arms Race*, ed. by Ernie Regehr and Simon Rosenblum (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1983), 205.

¹⁰⁹ Meyer, "Pierre Trudeau and the 'Suffocation' of the Nuclear Arms Race," 404.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹¹¹ John Kirton, *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (Canada: Thomson Nelson, 2007), 401; Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb*, 20.

¹¹² Tom Keating and Larry Pratt, *Canada, NATO and the Bomb: The Western Alliance in Crisis* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1988), 128, 149.

Israel and Pakistan.¹¹³ On the other hand, Canada announced a “moral imperative” to offer safety inspections to any country with CANDU reactors, including India.¹¹⁴

The end of the Cold War in 1991 completely altered the global geopolitical landscape. During the 1990s, the threat of cataclysmic nuclear war between major world powers was significantly reduced, but the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a situation in which unsecured nuclear materials risked falling into the hands of terrorist groups and other non-state and rogue actors. Canada played a role in securing these materials through the Global Partnership Program.¹¹⁵ Jean Chrétien’s Liberal administration, elected in late 1993, continued to take a strong stance against the testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons. Shortly after he was elected, Chrétien announced that it was his government’s “highest priority ... to secure international agreement to indefinitely and unconditionally extend the NPT” and increase “the capacity of the IAEA to effectively safeguard civilian nuclear systems.”¹¹⁶ The government followed through on Chrétien’s announcement and played a prominent role in international negotiations to extend the NPT indefinitely.¹¹⁷ Canada also played a significant role in creating the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, co-sponsoring the initiative.¹¹⁸ The Canadian government made the strongest response of the international community to India and Pakistan’s nuclear tests in the spring of 1998, with Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy condemning the “highly irresponsible act(s)” and banning military sales, opposing loans from the World Bank, suspending trade talks and withdrawing all non-humanitarian aid to both

¹¹³ Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Singh, "The India-Canada Civilian Nuclear Deal," 236.

¹¹⁵ Doern, Dorman and Morrison, "Precarious Opportunity," 21; Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP)*, May 11, 2016, https://www.international.gc.ca/gpp-ppm/global_partnership-partenariat_mondial.aspx?lang=eng.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 55.

¹¹⁷ Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 55; Paul, *Power versus Prudence*, 68.

¹¹⁸ Manpreet Sethi, "The Indo-Canadian Nuclear Relationship: Possibilities and Challenges," *International Journal* 69, no. 1 (2014): 43; Paul, *Power versus Prudence*, 68.

countries.¹¹⁹ When the question of a “nuclear-free Middle East” came up at the UN, Chrétien abstained from voting, while his Liberal successor, Paul Martin voted against it, demonstrating a shift in favour of protecting Israel.¹²⁰ Both governments’ votes on the question of a “nuclear-free Middle East” show that their principles about nuclear weapons proliferation did not necessarily carry when it came to Israel’s nuclear weapons program.

The Chrétien administration actively engaged in civil nuclear commerce, selling reactors to China in 1996 and 2005 (the latter was finalized under Martin).¹²¹ The administration was not initially inclined to push its NATO allies to disarm their nuclear weapons, but it changed direction after the House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade issued a report in December 1998 urging Canada to push for a review of the “nuclear component in NATO.”¹²² The review was undertaken by Canada’s allies, but it failed to cause NATO forces to de-nuclearize.¹²³

Canadian external nuclear policies have varied from prime minister to prime minister; however, with the exception of Canada’s assistance on the Manhattan Project during World War

¹¹⁹ Quoted in “Pakistan blast condemned (Canada reacts with anger and dismay to Pakistan’s nuclear weapon test),” *Canadian News Facts*, May 16, 1998, Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly.

<http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/apps/doc/A30571680/CPI?u=uvictoria&sid=CPI&xid=efdd24c7>; Singh, “The India-Canada Civilian Nuclear Deal,” 237; Sethi, “The Indo-Canadian Nuclear Relationship,” 38-39.

¹²⁰ The idea for a summit addressing a nuclear and chemical weapons-free Middle East had originally been suggested by Brian Mulroney to American President George H.W. Bush in the wake of the First Gulf War. A UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on the matter was passed on April 3rd, 1991. Although Canada no longer had a seat on the UNSC, it is conceivable that Canadian diplomats had played a role in crafting the early stages of the resolution. It is notable that the resolution does not mention Israel; it only targets Iraq by name. Andrew Rosenthal, “Bush Unveils Plan for Arms Control in the Middle East,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1991, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/108730867?accountid=14846> (accessed October 21, 2019); United Nations, *Security Council Resolution 687*, 3 April 1991, <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/FAB11BBFEA7E0B6585256C3F0065AEAE>; Donald Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today: Electoral Politics and Foreign Policy,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 197; Campbell Clark, “Pro-Israel shift at UN keeps balance, MPs say; Voting to back Jewish state shows solidarity with countries of similar values: Volpe.” *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 2004, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed July 13, 2019).

¹²¹ Duane Bratt, *Canada, the Provinces, and the Global Nuclear Revival: Advocacy Coalitions in Action* (Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2012), 252; Bratt, *The Politics of CANDU Exports*, 5.

¹²² Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb*, 14-17.

¹²³ Simpson, *NATO and the Bomb*; Paul, *Power versus Prudence*, 69.

Two and Canada's acquisition of American nuclear weapons under Pearson, Canada has been a strong advocate of nuclear weapons non-proliferation. Throughout the post-World War Two era, Canada was often a leader in crafting policies to limit the spread of nuclear arms in multinational forums, though Canadian diplomats would usually take care not to isolate Canada's nuclear armed allies. Canadian leaders would sometimes personalize their nuclear policies, meaning individuals could have a large impact on policy directions and initiatives, such as when Howard Green took a much stronger approach against nuclear tests and delayed Canada's acceptance of American nuclear weapons or when Pierre Trudeau returned American nuclear weapons and issued his "Policy of Suffocation." In spite of generally robust positions against nuclear weapons, Canada remained an enthusiastic supporter of the peaceful nuclear energy trade. Canada's history of opposition to nuclear weapons proliferation would make it a natural opponent of the Iran nuclear program once it was discovered there were secretive aspects to it that were outside the inspections of IAEA officials.

Chapter 4: The Policies of Stephen Harper's Government

Stephen Harper's Conservative Party was elected as a minority government in Parliament on January 26th, 2006, resulting in a noteworthy disruption in Canadian foreign relations. Harper announced that Canada would henceforth have a foreign policy based on the contradictory standards of principle and national interest, rather than "going along to get along," meaning that he wouldn't adopt positions just to win international approval for Canada.¹²⁴ The "Harper

¹²⁴ Adam Chapnick states that the Harper idea of "principle" in world affairs was for Canada to assert its strength and distinctiveness. Adam Chapnick, "A diplomatic counter-revolution: Conservative foreign policy, 2006-11," *International Journal* 67, no. 1 (Winter 2011-12): 153; Jordan Michael Smith, "Reinventing Canada: Stephen Harper's Conservative Revolution," *World Affairs* 174, no. 6 (March/April 2012): 25; Roland Paris, "Are Canadians still liberal internationalists? Foreign policy and public opinion in the Harper era," *International Journal* 69 no. 3 (2014): 281; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 5;

Doctrine” of foreign policy has been described as “simpler, less nuanced, seen in black and white, good and evil terms, results-oriented, ruthlessly guided by Canada’s self-interest, and reflective of core Conservative perceptions and values.”¹²⁵ The subjectivity of the values in this foreign policy style caused foreign policy to become personalised, as this paper demonstrates in the case of Iran. Tom Keating suggested in 2010 that a succession of minority governments and the short tenure of foreign and defense ministers under Harper had caused foreign policy to be directed “more by political whims ... than by any sort of interests” or international responsibilities.¹²⁶

A remarkable part of the “Harper Doctrine” was the prime minister’s willingness to do what he thought was “right” in the world regardless of the political cost – which would contradict the notion of pursuing self-interest. Probably the two starkest examples of this new position were the Conservative government’s decision during its years as a minority government to speak out on a regular basis against human rights abuses in the People’s Republic of China, and its unconditional support of Israel.¹²⁷ Harper also emphasized a neoconservative outlook which aspired for Canada to have even closer cooperation with the United States.¹²⁸ He had led a failed push for Canada to support the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 as leader of the

¹²⁵ Hugh Segal, *The Right Balance: Canada’s Conservative Tradition* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Publishers Inc., 2011), 181; Adam Chapnick, “Stephen Harper’s Israel Policy,” in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada’s Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 106; Kim Richard Nossal, “The Liberal Past in the Conservative Present: Internationalism in the Harper Era,” in *Canada in the World: Internationalism in Contemporary Canadian Foreign Policy*, eds. Heather A. Smith and Claire Turenne Sjolander (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22. John Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper* (Toronto: Signal, McClelland and Stewart, 2015), 340; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 9; Alghabra, “Harper’s Approach Lacks Nuance.”

¹²⁶ Keating noted that these issues also existed during the Chrétien and Martin administrations. Keating, “Whither the Middle-Power Identity?” 12.

¹²⁷ The Harper government strangely stopped making such strongly worded messages about human rights abuses in China after it won a majority government in 2011. Smith, “Reinventing Canada,” 24; Jennifer Ditchburn, “Harper Says He’ll Support Israel Even If It Hurts Canada Politically.” *CityNews* Toronto, November 9, 2010, National. <http://www.citytv.com/toronto/citynews/news/national/article/99489--harper-says-he-ll-support-israel-even-if-it-hurts-canada-politically>.

¹²⁸ Most notably, close military cooperation. Manuel Dorion-Soulié, “Introduction: Les idées mènent le Canada: l’idéologie néoconservatrice en politique étrangère canadienne.” *Études Internationales* 45, no. 4 (2014): 523; Dumas, “La politique iranienne du Canada,” 629; Brent Sasley and Tami Amanda Jacoby, “Canada’s Jewish and Arab Communities and Canadian Foreign Policy,” in *Canada and the Middle East in Theory and Practice*, eds. Paul Heinbecker and Bessma Momani, (Canada: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2007), 189.

opposition, and was a strong proponent of the Canadian military contribution to the American-led NATO missions in Afghanistan and Libya.¹²⁹

Harper's government also presided over several significant changes in Canada's external nuclear policies. Most notably, Canada completely reversed course on its approach to the Indian nuclear program, with Harper and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signing a bilateral civil nuclear cooperation deal in 2010. Minister of International Trade David Emerson declared India to be a "responsible democracy" that shared values such as freedom and rule of law with Canada, and Harper extolled the trade benefits the deal would bring to Canada.¹³⁰ Through these statements, the Conservatives revealed both an ideological principle of supporting countries with values similar to Canada and their support for Canada's economic interests. However, their principle of supporting nuclear non-proliferation and the NPT was thrown out. The Canada-India nuclear deal was not made out of the blue: in 2008, the United States, the IAEA and the NSG signed deals with India, indicating that the time had come for Canada to re-start nuclear cooperation after it had been frozen more than 40 years previously. Duane Bratt asserts the Harper administration was also motivated to make the nuclear deal with India by a desire to attract Indo-Canadian voters.¹³¹

Starting early in Stephen Harper's first administration (2006-2008), his government abstained on UN votes for a nuclear weapons-free Middle East, which targeted Israel's nuclear weapons program.¹³² Harper declared that his government would "not support resolutions at the UN that are aimed specifically at Israel or designed to create a bias in the resolution of the Middle East conflict," despite the fact it meant not taking a stand against nuclear proliferation.

¹²⁹ The Chrétien government reasoned their lack of support for the invasion of Iraq was due to the absence of UN sanction for the war. Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 26.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Sethi, "The Indo-Canadian Nuclear Relationship," 40.

¹³¹ Bratt, *Canada, the Provinces, and the Global Nuclear Revival*, 271.

¹³² Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 204.

Avoiding nuclear-free Middle East votes targeting Israel was in line with previous administrations.¹³³ The Conservative government came under fire from opposition MPs for not doing more to promote a nuclear weapons-free Middle East and for not pushing Israel into signing the NPT.¹³⁴ In May 2015, the Harper administration was heavily criticized both domestically and internationally for blocking major nuclear arms reduction talks because Israel would have been forced to admit it is a nuclear power, something the Jewish state so far has refused to reveal.¹³⁵

New Democratic Party (NDP) MP and former leader Alexa McDonough criticized the Conservative government for not taking a constructive role at NPT preparatory meetings in May 2008, “hurling accusations at Iran and North Korea” and ignoring the weapons programs of non-NPT signatories India, Pakistan and Israel.¹³⁶ Additionally, she criticized the government for not bringing Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or civil society experts to the meetings, accusing the government of “undermining the global fight against nuclear proliferation.”¹³⁷ In these cases, Canada appears to have strayed from its strong non-proliferation principles. Canada wasn’t alone though. In the case of Israel, Samuel Huntington noted in 1996 that Western countries in general had double standards when they expounded the risks of nuclear proliferation by Iran and Iraq, but ignored Israel; he explained the double standard as the “unavoidable price of universal standards of principle.”¹³⁸ This means countries were more likely to ignore the breach of their “universal principles” if it was by a friend or ally rather than by a

¹³³ Quoted in Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 197.

¹³⁴ HCD, 29 March 2010, 1051; 6 May 2010, 2466; 31 May 2010, 3152; 2 June 2010, 3308.

¹³⁵ Mike Blanchfield, “Canada cites defence for Israel in blocking UN plan to curb nuclear weapons,” *Globe and Mail*, May 25, 2015, Politics. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-cites-defence-for-israel-in-blocking-un-plan-to-curb-nuclear-weapons-1.3087073>.

¹³⁶ HCD, 9 May 2008, 5669.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 5669.

¹³⁸ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 184.

country of more distant cultural origin and geopolitical alignment. In this case, Canada's universal principle was nuclear non-proliferation, yet the Canadian government was not as concerned that Israel, a country more politically and culturally similar to Canada, had illegally constructed nuclear weapons.

Despite its inconsistent actions with regards to India and Israel, the Harper administration usually continued traditional Canadian policy and spoke out enthusiastically against nuclear weapons proliferation in multinational forums. Canada was very active in creating plans to combat nuclear weapons proliferation at Group of Eight summits. In particular, the Harper government wanted to set it as one of the centerpiece issues at the 2010 G8 summit held in Muskoka, Ontario.¹³⁹ High on the agenda was the need to convince the European members of the G8 to support the continuation of the Global Partnership Program, which was scheduled to end in 2012.¹⁴⁰ The Global Partnership Program was a multilateral program conceived by Canada to dismantle nuclear submarines and secure or destroy nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union.¹⁴¹ Canada had spent one billion dollars over 10 years on the program.¹⁴² At the 2010 G8 summit, former Russian ambassador to Canada and former chief arms control negotiator Georgiy Mamedov, said that he expected Canada to play a large role in creating incentives for countries to follow the NPT.¹⁴³ G8 negotiators were considering expanding the program to include Pakistan and several African uranium exporters which had poor records preventing smuggling.¹⁴⁴

Under Stephen Harper's government, Canada was willing to take strong foreign policy positions, even though they could be costly for the country's external relationships. Canadian

¹³⁹ "Harper says he supports sanctions to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions," *Waterloo Chronicle*, February 10, 2010.

¹⁴⁰ Canada was successful in extending the GPP. Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Campbell Clark, "Harper to push Canadian-led effort; Global Partnership Program aimed at securing vulnerable nuclear sites was created at G8 summit in Kananaskis, but European countries balk at continued cost while critics claim it risks triggering an India-Pakistan arms race," *Globe and Mail*, April 13, 2010.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ "Canada eyes nuclear arms control atop G8 summit agenda," *Waterloo Chronicle*, January 4, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, "Harper to push Canadian-led effort."

positions on nuclear weapons proliferation became more inconsistent. Canada followed the United States in restarting civil nuclear trade with India after decades of staunch opposition. The Harper government also deflected international pressure from Israel's nuclear program, although Canada did not have a history of steady opposition to that country's nuclear program.

Section 2: Canadian Rhetoric and Policy towards Iran’s Nuclear Program

Chapter 5: Canadian-Iranian Relations during the Harper Years: The Perspective of the Canadian Parliament

The Harper administration’s line on the Iranian nuclear program became steadily more hyperbolic through the course of its time in power, both in Parliament, as well as in speeches, press releases and interviews. From the first months of his first government in 2006, to the final months of his last term in 2015, Harper’s message to Iran was clear – it was not trusted, and it needed to stop uranium enrichment and address international concerns about its non-compliance to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.¹ The Conservative government was clear it would judge Iran by its actions, not its words. However, the manner in which this message was communicated was initially rather subtle. Canadian Parliamentarians believed the Iran nuclear program likely had a weapons component to it. This stance may have been derived from reports by the House Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and Canadian Security Intelligence Service publications, all of which said Iran was “widely believed to be seeking the capability to produce nuclear weapons.”² This chapter charts the course of the Canadian Parliament’s rhetoric and policies against Iran and its nuclear program in order to map changes.

During the first session of the Thirty-ninth Parliament, from April 2006 to May 2007, Harper’s first administration continued its policies towards Iran in the direction set by the Martin administration. This “controlled engagement” policy was already in place and relations were

¹ Canada, Government of Canada, News Release, *Canada Welcomes IAEA Decision to Report Concerns Regarding Iran’s Nuclear Program to the UNSC*, February 4, 2006; HCD, 5 May 2015, 13520.

² Canada, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, *Ahmadinejad’s Iran: A Threat to Peace, Human Rights and International Law*, December, 2010; Canada, Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Iran in Focus: Current Issues for Canadian Foreign Policy*, December 2012; CSIS, *Public Report*, 2011-2013, 21; CSIS, *Public Report*, 2013-2014, 28.

sour due to Zahra Kazemi's murder. In Parliament, it was almost always Liberal Party Members of Parliament, especially Irwin Cotler, Keith Martin, Mario Silva, Ken Dryden, Susan Kadis and Anita Neville, who spoke out against Iran and demanded stronger action from the Conservative government. These MPs regularly commented on issues involving Iran which concerned them: its human rights abuses (including the ongoing Kazemi case), nuclear program, support of terrorist groups, and incitement to genocide and threats against Israel.³ Peter MacKay, serving as foreign minister, often responded to Liberal calls to publicly censure Iran for human rights abuses or refer Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for incitement to genocide, by giving a low key condemnation or by saying the Iranian action was bad and he took the matter seriously. MacKay would then maintain that the Canadian government could deal with the matter more effectively through diplomatic means.⁴ The Conservatives even voted against a Liberal motion to refer Ahmadinejad to the ICC.⁵ MacKay also insisted on using quiet diplomacy to free Ramin Jahanbegloo, a detained Iranian Canadian philosopher who publicly criticized Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denials.⁶ MacKay did express a stronger condemnation when responding to a conference organized by Iran calling into question the details of the Holocaust, calling it an "outrage" and an "insult."⁷ When questioned about Iran's danger to Canada, Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day assured the House that "Iran [was] far from having the capability" to attack Canada at the current date, nevertheless, he did not

³ These MPs considered Holocaust denial and threats to destroy Israel as incitement to genocide and would sometimes refer to the UN Genocide Convention to support their claims. HCD, 3 May 2006, 835; 5 May 2006, 996; 19 May 2006, 1600; 18 September 2006, 2891; 13 December 2006, 6024, 6026; 6 February 2007, 6462; 20 March 2007, 7663; 8 May 2007, 7663; 9 May 2007, 9251; 14 May 2007, 9435; 17 May 2007, 9672.

⁴ HCD, 19 May 2006, 1601; 30 May 2006, 1726; 6 June 2006, 2024; 9 May 2007, 9251; 14 May 2007, 9435, 9436; 17 May 2007, 9672.

⁵ It may have been that the Liberals were playing political games with the Conservatives, trying to put them in difficult political situations. HCD, 8 May 2007, 7663; 9 May 2007, 9251.

⁶ HCD, 5 May 2006, 996; 30 May 2006, 1726.

⁷ HCD, 12 December 2006, 5989.

foreclose Iran's potential to be a threat in the future.⁸ No member of the Conservative party condemned the Iranian nuclear program to Parliament until March 30th, 2007, when Peter MacKay included a brief call for Iran to stop its nuclear program during a comment on British sailors kidnapped by Iran from Iraqi waters.⁹

Relations between Iran and Canada suffered their first minor crisis of the Harper administration in December 2007 when Iran rejected John Mundy, Canada's selection for ambassador to Tehran, expelling him from the country. Again, the Canadian government maintained diplomatic language, with Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier calling the act "unjustified" and promising to "promote human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in Iran."¹⁰ MacKay's accusation of Iranian support for the Taliban at about this time may have indicated increasing Canadian frustration with Iran. Now the Conservative government started to take stronger action against Iran. Parliament supported a Liberal private member's bill, Motion No. 410, which called for the Canadian government to divest from corporations doing business in Iran and Sudan.¹¹ Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Deepak Obhrai said he felt like the Liberal members' concerns about Iran's behaviour were justified due to its support of militant groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the persecution of people of the Baha'i faith, its defiance of the international community with regards to its nuclear program, and the lack of progress on the Zahra Kazemi case.¹²

The second session of the Thirty-ninth Parliament (October 2007-September 2008), saw Conservative MPs express more concern about Iran's nuclear program; however, the overall

⁸ HCD, 3 May 2006, 889.

⁹ Whether the British soldiers were in Iraqi or Iranian waters is disputed. HCD, 30 March 2007, 79003.

¹⁰ HCD, 5 December 2007, 1759.

¹¹ The Bloc Quebecois bemoaned that this motion was made unilaterally and not in conjunction with Canada's allies. Sudan was included in this motion because of its government's connections to the genocide in Darfur, which was ongoing. HCD, 5 February 2008, 2635.

¹² HCD, 5 February 2008, 2637.

discourse regarding Iran and its nuclear program remained calm and businesslike.¹³ Due to increasing Conservative concern over Iran's nuclear program and sponsorship of terrorist groups, Liberal Party members commented on Iran less frequently, but not necessarily less alarmingly, such as when Irwin Cotler declared that a nuclear-armed Iran would be "the great threat to international peace."¹⁴

The second session of the Fortieth Parliament started after Parliament came back in session from prorogation in February 2009. On June 17th, Prime Minister Harper spoke out strongly against Iran's suppression of protests following the fraudulent re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Harper claimed to have been "outspoken for a very long time ... about the unacceptable ideology, democratic practices, and human rights record of the government of Iran... We find the behaviour of that regime unacceptable in so many ways that I cannot even begin to name them."¹⁵ The Conservative government continued to refuse to support Liberal member Irwin Cotler's Bill C-412 – the *Iran Accountability Act* to combat incitement to genocide, domestic repression and nuclear armament in Iran by divesting from the country and freezing the assets of anyone involved in Iran's military or nuclear infrastructure.¹⁶ Instead, the government insisted on using existing measures and channels of diplomacy to deal with Iran.¹⁷ By the late spring of 2010, concern about Iran's nuclear program appears to have been widespread within Parliament, with the topic being brought up more often, and with Parliament passing a unanimous vote calling on Iran to "desist from the illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons"

¹³ For a part of this time, the Department of Foreign Affairs was caught in a scandal involving Maxime Bernier, which caused him to resign as minister of foreign affairs.

¹⁴ HCD, 28 May 2008, 6168.

¹⁵ This was the first time Harper referred to Iran's ideology, this will be discussed later in the paper. HCD, 17 June 2009, 4721.

¹⁶ HCD, 9 June 2009, 4344.

¹⁷ HCD, 27 October 2009, 6239.

and condemning human rights violations.¹⁸ In an interesting reflection on human rights in Iran, Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon recounted his experience meeting the Iranian Foreign Minister the year before. After discussing Iranian human rights, Cannon concluded the Iranian government:

absolutely do not understand the fundamental notion of what human rights means ... As long as that government is in place there will be no progress and no chance for freedom for the people of Iran. I think that as one the Parliament of Canada should speak out loudly so that our message can be clearly heard...¹⁹

His comment could be interpreted as a soft call for regime change in Iran. The debate continued, with Irwin Cotler displaying alarm at information he learned from an IAEA report. Cotler declared that Iran was “advancing in its efforts to build a nuclear warhead” and developing a missile to deliver that warhead.²⁰ Conservative MP John Weston made clear that the government “opposes in the strongest terms” the proliferation of nuclear weapons in Iran and it had imposed unilateral “made-in-Canada” sanctions to target members of the regime responsible for overseeing the nuclear program.²¹ NDP MP Jim Maloway continued the debate by commending the government for following through on the Iran subcommittee recommendation for Radio Canada International to start Farsi radio and internet broadcasts targeted at Iranians.²²

On May 2nd, 2011, the Conservative Party was returned to power in Canada, this time with a majority government. There was a noticeably more antagonistic tone in debates between political parties during the Conservative majority, probably because the parties no longer needed to work together to pass legislation and could instead compete for sound bites. In the 41st

¹⁸ HCD, 9 June 2010, 3597, 3598; 17 June 2010, 3970.

¹⁹ HCD, 16 February 2011, 8267.

²⁰ According to the 2011 IAEA report, Iran was carrying out activities “relevant” to the development of an explosive device. International Atomic Energy Agency, *IAEA Annual Report 2011*, 10; HCD, 16 February 2011, 8268.

²¹ Canada passed sanctions to restrict financial services and arms exports to Iran. John Weston represented West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea-to-Sky Country, a riding with a large Iranian Canadian community. HCD, 16 February 2011, 8283.

²² HCD, 16 February 2011, 8270.

Parliament, discussion about Iran including its nuclear program, human rights, threats against Israel, and connections to terrorist groups was dominated by the Conservatives. Only Liberal MP Irwin Cotler stayed highly active for his party in commenting on, and crafting legislation dealing with, Iran's nuclear program and human rights situation. At least part of the reason for this was that the Liberal Party was reduced to third party status, winning only 34 seats in the house, and the NDP, now the official opposition, had not previously shown much interest in the Iran file. The first major pronouncement about Iran in the first session of the 41st Parliament came from the new foreign minister, John Baird. Baird announced new sanctions against five Iranians in response to their role in an apparent assassination attempt of the Saudi ambassador in Washington. Baird iterated that both he and Harper thought that Iran "represent[ed] probably the most significant threat to the world, to global peace and security."²³ The following month, Baird responded to a question about whether the government would increase sanctions on Iran by stating that Canada had the "toughest sanctions ... in the world" and that he was very worried by recent IAEA reports on its nuclear program.²⁴ Five days later, Minister of International Trade Peter van Loan announced the *Special Economic Measures Act* (SEMA), new multilateral sanctions blocking almost all financial transactions with the Islamic Republic.²⁵ Responding to a question by interim Liberal leader Bob Rae about whether or not Canada would support a unilateral action against Iran (presumably by Israel, which remained unnamed), Baird made clear Canada's hope for a diplomatic solution and opposition to the use of force against Iran.²⁶

In the spring of 2012, Iran surprised the Canadian Parliament by charging Canada with having a poor human rights record. On March 15th, 2012, Manitoba Conservative MP Robert

²³ HCD, 18 October 2011, 2147.

²⁴ HCD, 16 November 2011, 3152.

²⁵ HCD, 21 November 2011, 3333.

²⁶ Rae had said that the British and Americans were concerned about a unilateral action being taken (from an unnamed country). HCD, 2 March 2012, 5742.

Sopuck angrily announced that Iran was planning to bring some Manitoban Indigenous chiefs to Iran under the guise of caring about their human rights.²⁷ Two First Nations leaders, Terry Nelson and Dennis Pashe, ended up taking the trip and disparaging Canada; their testimony assisted Iranian TV portraying First Nation reserves as concentration camps.²⁸

As foreign minister, John Baird often took the lead in parliamentary talking points concerning Iran. He always mentioned the government's opposition to the nuclear program in discussions about Iran. Baird made clear that Canada was putting its full support behind the P5+1 negotiations to avoid the "disaster" of a nuclear armed Iran.²⁹ The P5+1 are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (USA, UK, France, Russia, China), plus Germany. This group had been working with Iran to resolve concerns around the latter's nuclear program.

Baird also mentioned Iran's nuclear program as a factor when he announced the most extreme relations break with Iran during the Harper period: the withdrawal of Canadian staff from its embassy in Tehran and the expulsion of Iranian embassy officials in Ottawa on September 7th, 2012.³⁰ The principal reason Baird gave was Iran's failure to protect foreign diplomats under the Vienna Convention, given the ransacking of Britain's embassy in Tehran the previous year.³¹ When asked for more details about the Tehran embassy closure, Baird mentioned that Canada had designated the Iranian regime as a state sponsor of terrorism under the *Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act* (JVTA), the same day it closed its embassy.³² It's hard to

²⁷ HCD, 15 March 2012, 6367.

²⁸ HCD, 17 October 2012, 11089.

²⁹ HCD, 28 May 2012, 8405.

³⁰ HCD, 17 September 2012, 9999.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9999.

³² The JVTA allows the victims of terrorist actions to sue perpetrators of terrorism and the states that support them, with the aim of deterring countries from supporting terrorists aiming to strike Canadians. The JVTA would repeal protections to foreign states from being sued in Canadian courts granted by the State Immunity Act. Thus when

see the evacuation of the Canadian embassy as a coincidence in light of the highly antagonistic JVTA, especially since Iran had a tainted record of observing the Vienna Convention. It would make sense that Canada closed its Tehran embassy to keep its staff out of harm's way when the JVTA was passed. In time, the closure of the Canadian embassy in Tehran would be lamented by the NDP because it would contribute to a further loss of Canadian influence in Iran.³³

Despite their many concerns about Iran's nuclear program and support of terrorism, rhetoric in Parliament about Iran usually remained businesslike. Nevertheless, members of the government started to make more frequent and more alarmist or hyperbolic speeches and comments about Iran than before. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence and former diplomat Chris Alexander said a nuclear Iran "could represent the biggest threat we have seen thus far in the 21st century."³⁴ John Weston labelled Iran the "greatest threat" to world peace, a sentiment echoed a year and half later by James Bezan, who added that its leaders were "violent, sadistic and brutal."³⁵ Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Costas Menegakis also expressed that a nuclear Iran would be a threat to Canada.³⁶ Speaking on behalf of the government, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Deepak Obhrai labelled the Islamic Republic as "the biggest threat to international peace and security in the world today."³⁷

The last week in May 2013 was Parliament's "Iran Accountability Week," created to scrutinise human rights issues in Iran. Baird and other Tory politicians trumpeted government actions and policies such as walking out on the Iran-led UN Conference on Disarmament. They

states broke Canadian or international law, such as when Iran allegedly did in the case of Zahra Kazemi, they could be sued for financial compensation. Canada, House of Commons, *Question No. 924*, 19 November 2012, 12170.

³³ HCD, 5 November 2012, 11903; 5 May 2015, 13513.

³⁴ HCD, 7 March 2013, 14739.

³⁵ HCD, 31 January 2012, 4663; 30 May 2013, 17356.

³⁶ HCD, 25 November 2013, 1310.

³⁷ HCD, 23 April 2013, 15797.

also boasted about adding another round of (unilateral) sanctions against Iran. As part of this sanctions package, the Canadian government founded the Global Dialogue on the Future of Iran. The Global Dialogue provided a forum where Iranians both inside and outside the country could discuss human rights.³⁸ It also published a Farsi language translation of Foreign Affairs Canada's policies towards Iran. After Hassan Rouhani was elected on June 15th, 2013, a "Rouhanimeter," which measured Iran's new president's promises, was created under the same Canadian government initiative as the Global Dialogue.³⁹ The Global Dialogue on the Future of Iran conference, hosted by the University of Toronto on May 10th, 2013, and attended by Baird, was successfully broadcast from Canada to 360,000 Iranians, evading Iran's internet censors.⁴⁰

During the second session of the Forty-first Parliament, starting in October 2013, the focus on Iran was divided into three broad issues: international negotiations surrounding Iran's nuclear program, Iran's sponsorship of terrorism and assistance for the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria's civil war, and Iran's human rights violations, including the persecution of the Baha'i religious minority and an uptick in executions under its new reformist president, Hassan Rouhani. As negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran progressed, the Tory government made it clear to Parliament that sanctions against Iran would not be removed until Iran showed concrete actions it was dismantling any potential military aspect of its nuclear program and allowing full access to its nuclear facilities.⁴¹ During May 2014's third annual Iran Accountability Week, Parliament celebrated the liberation of two political prisoners: Iranian Canadian computer technician Hamid Ghassemi-Shall and human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh.⁴² In the final Iran debate of the 41st

³⁸ Munk School of Global Affairs, *Global Dialogue on the Future of Iran*, 2014. <https://theglobaldialogue.ca/about/> (accessed October 15, 2019).

³⁹ In 2013, 5 million unique Iranians accessed the Global Dialogue website. Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 42-3; Dumas, "La politique iranienne du Canada," 638.

⁴⁰ HCD, 31 May 2013, 17469.

⁴¹ HCD, 25 November 2013, 1310; 5 May 2015, 13520.

⁴² HCD, 13 May 2014, 5320.

Parliament, during May 2015's fourth annual Iran Accountability Week, discussion focussed on the state of Iran's nuclear negotiations, Iran's sponsorship of terrorist groups and Iran's human rights record.⁴³

The Conservative government started with a cautious and diplomatic approach to dealing with Iran and its nuclear program. During its first administration, from 2006-2008, most of those with the most vocal concerns about Iran in the House of Commons were Liberal members. Many of the debates concerning the Iranian nuclear program also addressed topics such as Iranian threats against Israel, Ahmadinejad's incitements to genocide, human rights, democracy in Iran and Iran's support for the Assad regime in Syria. The Conservatives began to use increasingly strong rhetoric against Iran in Parliament in 2009 and 2010, and then especially following the party's big electoral win in 2011. This had to do with advancing concern over the progress of Iran's nuclear program, and likely the realization that there could be electoral benefits in demonizing Iran. The Conservative majority government increased pressure on Iran, breaking diplomatic relations, designating the country a state sponsor of terrorism and interfering in Iranian domestic affairs. In May 2013, the government launched its first annual "Iran Accountability Week" and targeted the country's nuclear program with unilateral sanctions, showing a shift in policy in addition to rhetoric.

Chapter 6: Explosive Rhetoric: The Harper Administration Publicly takes on Iran's Nuclear Program

The patterns of rhetoric used in public forums outside of Parliament towards Iran's nuclear program mirrored the trajectory of parliamentary rhetoric: the government initially avoided grand statements about the Iranian nuclear program, but grew louder and louder. As a

⁴³ HCD, 5 May 2015, 13499-13526.

whole, the Harper government's public statements were more hyperbolic and alarmist than its parliamentary addresses. This section follows the same chronological pattern as the previous section.

Harper and other members of his Conservative government avoided strong rhetoric when discussing the Iran nuclear program with the public during their first term (2006-2008). For example, when responding to questions in April 2006, Harper said he was supporting a peaceful solution to his American ally's legitimate concerns about Iran's nuclear program.⁴⁴ In February 2007, Harper was publicly chided for his public silence on the Iran nuclear issue by Paul Heinbecker. The charge stemmed from Harper's failure to use Canada as a restraining influence on the United States and Iran during a period of rising tensions surrounding the latter's nuclear program.⁴⁵ Relations between Iran and Canada remained cool; there was no attempt by the Harper government to make a rapprochement with Iran following the countries' turbulent relationship during the Martin years. Peter MacKay explained the difficulty of working with Ahmadinejad's Iran was due to the president's "hateful, ludicrous" views.⁴⁶

During his second term in office, Harper responded in a more muscular manner to the revelation that Iran was constructing another uranium enrichment site in the mountains near the holy Shia city of Qom. In a press release during the 2009 G20 meetings, Harper condemned Iran, and went on to issue what appeared to be a blank cheque to his allies when he stated that "Canada will be very supportive of whatever actions are necessary to deal with what is a

⁴⁴ David Pugliese, "Iran moves ahead on nukes: Nuclear program allows Iran to keep strategic options open," *Nanaimo Daily News*, April 21, 2006, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed June 19, 2019).

⁴⁵ Les Whittington, "Harper chided for silence in U.S.-Iran standoff; Critics say Ottawa must push for diplomatic solution to the crisis over nuclear technology," *Toronto Star*, February 17, 2007, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

⁴⁶ Mike Blanchfield, "Iranian leader's views hurt peace talks: MacKay; 'Hateful, ludicrous'," *National Post*, May 15, 2007, LexisNexis Academic (accessed June 23, 2019).

tremendous threat to international peace and security.”⁴⁷ This statement was also the first time Harper referred to Iran’s “abhorrent ideology” directly to the general public, possibly a dog-whistle to his supporters about Islam.⁴⁸ The reasons behind, and purposes of, statements about Iran’s “ideology” will be further examined when this paper discusses Harper’s personal beliefs. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s February 2010 proclamation to a Tehran crowd that Iranian scientists had enriched uranium to 20% uranium-235 (at which point it becomes easier to produce weapons-grade level uranium, which is 90% U-235) caused Harper to say he would use his G8 presidency to put a stop to the “grave danger” Iran’s nuclear program posed.⁴⁹

Triggered by a May 2010 UN call for a nuclear-free Middle East conference, which mentioned Israel’s need to join the NPT, but made no mention of Iran’s nuclear program, normally placid and diplomatic Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon called on “belligerent and deceitful” Iran, “the single greatest threat to global peace and security,” to “comply fully” with the IAEA before any conference would take place.⁵⁰ This comment reflects the Harper administration’s pre-occupation with ensuring Israel was not singled out in international forums. Cannon followed up two months later by announcing more sanctions to stop Iran’s “irresponsible and aggressive government,” known as the *Special Economic Measures Act* (SEMA), which prohibited almost all financial transactions with Iran.⁵¹

⁴⁷ “Iran’s nuclear plans ‘abhorrent,’” *Times & Transcript*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ Juliet O’Neill and Steven Edwards, “Harper slams Iran over nuclear activity; PM condemns human rights abuses,” *Windsor Star*, February 12, 2010, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; “Harper says he supports sanctions to curb Iran’s nuclear ambitions,” *Waterloo Chronicle*, February 10, 2010, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; O’Neill and Edwards, “Harper slams Iran over nuclear activity.”

⁵⁰ “Nuclear inspections in Iran a must: Cannon,” *Windsor Star*, May 31, 2010, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

⁵¹ Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Statement by Minister Cannon on Iran Sanctions*, Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon, July 26, 2010, <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/07/statement-minister-cannon-iran-sanctions.html>.

The Harper government made few public statements about Iran in 2011. But in 2012, Harper and his new foreign minister, John Baird, came out swinging. During an interview with CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge, Harper declared that “there is absolutely no doubt (the Iranians) are lying” about the peaceful nature of their nuclear program and called the Iranian regime religious fanatics whose “statements imply ... no hesitation of using nuclear weapons if they see them achieving their religious or political purposes.”⁵² Baird, in a written article, made references to Ahmadinejad’s threats against Israel, saying Iran’s “stated goal is the complete destruction of the Jewish state and the Jewish people... when fanatics issue clear threats, it is smart to take them at their word.”⁵³ Such apocalyptic statements about the potential of a nuclear armed Iran imply that any measures should be taken to stop them. These sharply contradicted previous statements the government released about the importance of diplomacy.⁵⁴ Baird’s comment about the fanaticism of the regime also ignored the priority it had consistently put on its own survival.

The near-apocalyptic language continued with now-retired Stockwell Day, who exclaimed that he and Harper “have been utterly convinced... that Iran will use nuclear weapons against Israel at its earliest possibility” based on Ahmadinejad’s menacing statements.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Canadian government did not solely resort to bluster and talk of catastrophe; it did sometimes play a restraining role in regional tensions. During Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Canada from March 2nd to 4th, 2012, Harper tried to exert a

⁵² Quoted in Ernie Regehr, "Tone down rhetoric on Iran nuclear question," *Guelph Mercury*, February 4, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; Michael Den Tandt, "Canada must step softly with nuclear Iran," *Calgary Herald*, February 3, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

⁵³ Quoted in Den Tandt, "Canada must step softly with nuclear Iran."

⁵⁴ HCD, 6 June 2006, 2024; 27 October 2009, 6239; 14 May 2012, 8041.

⁵⁵ Stockwell Day, "Stockwell Day: We Must Defend Israel's Right To Defend Itself," *OpenCanada.Org*, April 4, 2012, In Depth, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/stockwell-day-we-must-defend-israels-right-to-defend-itself/>.

calming effect on his Israeli counterpart's militant rhetoric against Iran, urging Netanyahu to let diplomacy work and reach a peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue.⁵⁶

During John Baird's public announcement of the closing of the Canadian embassy in Tehran, he repeated the refrain that Canada saw "the government of Iran as the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world today."⁵⁷ Iran responded to the Canadian government's actions by accusing the "racist government in Canada" of having its policies dictated to by Zionists (Israelis) and the British.⁵⁸ Despite protests from some former diplomatic staff and academics, the closure of Canada's embassy in Tehran was actually quite popular with the Canadian public: according to an Angus Reid poll, 72% of Canadians supported the move; the same number also believed Iran was developing nuclear weapons.⁵⁹ These numbers indicate a convergence of public opinion with Conservative policy towards Iran and its nuclear program, demonstrating that the government's bold actions were popularly supported.

The heated language from the Canadian prime minister continued in his reception speech after winning the World Statesman Award from Rabbi Arthur Schneier's Appeal of Conscience Foundation. Harper called Iran a "clear and present danger" with a "truly malevolent ideology."⁶⁰ In response to the Iranian government's apparent bad-faith negotiating, where the country was advancing its nuclear program while progressing very slowly with negotiations with the P5+1, John Baird announced new unilateral sanctions in a press release on May 29th, 2013.

⁵⁶ Omar Alghabra, "Omar Alghabra: Harper's Approach Lacks Nuance," *OpenCanada.Org*, April 6, 2012, In Depth, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/omar-ghabra-harpers-approach-lacks-nuance/>.

⁵⁷ "Canada Closes Embassy in Iran, to Expel Iranian Diplomats," *Reuters*, September 7, 2012, World News, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-iran/canada-closes-embassy-in-iran-to-expel-iranian-diplomats-idUSBRE8860QC20120907>; "Canada Shuts Tehran Embassy, Kicks out Diplomats," *CBS News*, September 8, 2012, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/canada-shuts-tehran-embassy-kicks-out-diplomats/>.

⁵⁸ "Canada Pursing British, Israeli Policies: Iran," *Tehran Times*, September 8, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120912043555/http://tehrantimes.com/politics/101335-canada-pursuing-british-israeli-policies-iran#>.

⁵⁹ Stewart Bell, "Canadians back actions against Iran, poll finds; 72% support recent decision to close consulate," *National Post*, September 20, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic .

⁶⁰ Quoted in Levitt, "Canada PM Sees Iran as 'Clear and Present Danger'."

The sanctions would ban almost all exports to and imports from Iran. Baird said he had lost faith in Iran's "regressive, clerical military dictatorship" and wanted to stop its "reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons capabilities."⁶¹ Baird announced that Canada would exempt the sale of civilian technologies to Iran which could "break through the regime's curtain of propaganda" to help the Iranian people to access outside information and communicate with each other.⁶² As part of this 2.3 million dollar initiative, the Canadian government founded the Global Dialogue on the Future of Iran. Iran did not respond to these subversive moves by the Canadian government.

After the election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran in 2013, the rhetoric emanating from the Islamic Republic took a much more moderate and conciliatory tone. This new tenor was embraced by the Obama administration and the rest of the P5+1, which then restarted negotiations. Nevertheless, Harper's Conservatives remained cautious. In response to the restarted negotiations, Harper declared that his "sincere advice would be that when it comes to the government of Iran, we should carefully monitor deeds far more than words."⁶³ To that end, Canada increased its share of IAEA funding to inspect Iranian nuclear sites.⁶⁴ Once the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) was signed between Iran and the P5+1 on November 24th, 2013, as an interim agreement, Baird announced that Ottawa was "deeply sceptical" of the deal and would not lay off sanctions, nor give Tehran "the benefit of the doubt" until concrete action had been made.⁶⁵ The official Global Affairs Canada statement by Baird underlined the threat of a nuclear Iran to Canada and its allies, trumpeted the success of international sanctions in bringing Iran to

⁶¹ Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Canada Further Tightens Sanctions on Iran*, Foreign Minister John Baird, May 29, 2013, <https://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiqués/2013/05/29b.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁶² Levitz, Stephanie. "Canada bans almost all exports to and imports from Iran." *Globe and Mail*, May 29, 2013, Top Stories, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-bans-almost-all-exports-to-and-imports-from-iran/article12233235/>.

⁶³ Quoted in "Harper skeptical about kinder, gentler Iran; Deeds are more important than words, PM says," *Ottawa Citizen*, September 25, 2013, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic .

⁶⁴ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 42.

⁶⁵ "Harper carps at progress," *Toronto Star* November 26, 2013, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed 20 June 2019); Kestler-D'Amours, "Canada and Israel team up against Iran."

the table, and announced that Canadian sanctions would remain in force until the Iranian people received their long-denied “freedom and prosperity,” an apparent call for regime change.⁶⁶ The statement also makes an important point that a nuclear-armed Iran would damage the progress of decades of work against nuclear proliferation, tying in Canada’s long history as a leader in that field.⁶⁷

The year 2014 was a quiet year for government statements on Iran directed at the Canadian public. International diplomats were occupied by multiple crises and processes including negotiating a final nuclear deal with Iran, the Russian annexation of Crimea and war in eastern Ukraine, and the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (IS). As Thomas Juneau notes, Russia and IS’s aggressive actions caused the Canadian government to downgrade Iran from the “greatest threat” to a “significant threat” to world peace and security, meaning the Canadian government now interpreted Russia and IS’s actions as even more menacing than Iran’s.⁶⁸

During the final year of Harper’s administration, the P5+1 and Iran were putting the final touches on their negotiations. Harper, though, did not strike a conciliatory tone, wishing for regime change in the Islamic Republic during a speech to the Iranian Canadian community on *Nowruz*, the Iranian New Year. Harper said he desired the “return of spring” in Iran, informing the crowd that his “government shares [their] hope that Iran itself will experience a renewal, that

⁶⁶ The sanctions were applied because of Iran’s nuclear program, but even after Iran was verified to be compliant with the JCPOA on “Implementation Day,” February 5th, 2016, some sanctions in *SEMA* were not lifted due to ongoing concerns about Iran’s behaviour. Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Statement on Iran’s Nuclear Program*, Foreign Minister John Baird, November 24, 2013, <https://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communicues/2013/11/24a.aspx?lang=eng>; Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Canada amends its sanctions against Iran*, February 5th, 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2016/02/canada-amends-its-sanctions-against-iran.html>.

⁶⁷ Global Affairs Canada, *Statement on Iran’s Nuclear Program*, November 24, 2013.

⁶⁸ Thomas Juneau, “Iran After a Nuclear Deal: Where Will Canada Stand?” *Centre for International Policy Studies* Blog, July 15, 2015, Analysis, <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2015/07/15/iran-after-a-nuclear-deal-where-will-canada-stand/> (accessed 20 June 2019).

one day Iran will be a thriving, open country, and that the Iranian people will live free from tyranny and oppression.”⁶⁹

Iran and the P5+1 reached a final deal called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on July 14th, 2015, which cut off any path to a nuclear weapon for at least the next decade and a half. The new Canadian foreign minister, Rob Nicholson, did not express support for quick sanctions relief, announcing again that Iran was still a significant threat and Canada would “continue to judge Iran by its actions not its words” and await IAEA verification that Iran was complying with the deal.⁷⁰

The rhetorical trajectory of the Harper government followed a similar path in press releases, interviews and other public statements as it did in Parliament, with alarmist and aggressive statements increasing from 2009 until 2012, when they reached a zenith. Following that point, Harper government members made several calls for regime change in Iran, including one in a statement to the Iranian Canadian community – a clear play for votes. The November 24th, 2013 Global Affairs Canada announcement and subsequent statements show that policy had also changed and sanctions relief would be tied to regime change and compliance with a nuclear deal.

⁶⁹ Quoted in "Stephen Harper expresses hope for an Iran 'free from tyranny'."

⁷⁰ Quoted in “Israel, Jewish Groups Condemn Iran Nuclear Deal,” *Canadian Jewish News*, July 14, 2015, International, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/israel/israel-jewish-groups-condemn-iran-nuclear-deal>.

Section 3: The Motivations behind the Harper Government's Policies and Rhetoric Towards the Iranian Nuclear Program

Chapter 7: Canada's Approach to Sanctioning the Iranian Nuclear Program through Multilateral Action

Multiple factors motivated or pushed the Harper administration's positions and views on the Iran nuclear program. For most of Harper's time in office, Canada's policies towards Iran and its nuclear program were strongly linked to actions taken by Canada's allies and multilateral resolutions made at multinational forums such as the United Nations, NATO or the G8. After the interim Joint Plan of Action was struck between Iran and the P5+1 on November 24th, 2013, Canadian policy and rhetoric became uncoupled from its international friends and allies, save Israel.

As leader of the opposition, Harper had called the Liberal government's multilateral approach to international affairs a "weak nation strategy," suggesting a unilateral, self-interested approach would be the right way to approach international relations.¹ In government, John Baird made some high profile criticisms of the UN for allowing nations with poor human rights records to sit on the Human Rights Council.² Canadian diplomat David Mulroney remarked that Harper's government did not care what the United Nations thought of them, and former Canadian representative to the UN Paul Heinbecker declared that Harper didn't "have a clue what the UN is about."³ Harper showed his contempt for the UN by not bothering to show up to the United Nations General Assembly due to a minor domestic event in 2009, and again in 2012, despite

¹ Mike Blanchfield states that although the Liberals sometimes lost patience and lashed out at the UN, they continued to support it and work within its organizations. Quoted in Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 28, 39.

² Michael Harris, *Party of One: Stephen Harper and Canada's Radical Makeover* (Toronto: Viking, 2014) 239; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 71.

³ Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 77; Heinbecker is quoted in Harris, *Party of One*, 239.

already being in New York receiving an award.⁴ His government also displayed an inadequate understanding of multilateralism by failing to coordinate with like-minded allies its walkout of Ahmadinejad's belligerent speech at the UN World Conference against Racism (Durban II) in 2009 or its boycott of Durban III in 2011.⁵

Despite the Harper government's apparent lack of respect for the UN, Canada remained one of the top ten donor nations to the UN.⁶ Motions against Iran submitted by Canada's allies informed its actions against Iran. According to testimonies by officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs during a December 2012 hearing on Iran, Canadian nuclear sanctions were complementary to its allies.⁷ At the hearing, Ali Ehsassi stated that "one must accept that the package of international sanctions adopted against Iran is the product of international policy coordination. It would be folly to expect Canada not to act in concert with its closest allies."⁸ According to Philippe Dumas, the role of Canadian sanctions was to support and legitimize American and European sanctions against Iran; the Canadian government was aware that its sanctions alone would not significantly harm the Iranian economy.⁹

Canada led the way in the UN General Assembly sponsoring an annual resolution condemning Iran's human rights abuses; however, it was almost powerless to make meaningful motions against Iran's nuclear program since it lacked a seat on the UN Security Council

⁴ Chapnick, "Middle Power No More," 106.

⁵ Adam Chapnick, "A diplomatic counter-revolution: Conservative foreign policy, 2006-11," *International Journal* 67, no. 1 (Winter 2011-12): 151.

⁶ However, as Adam Chapnick notes, the Canadian contribution to peacekeeping and policing missions declined from 6th to 55th in the world in terms of numbers of people contributed. "Middle Power No More," 106; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 7.

⁷ Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Iran in Focus: Current Issues for Canadian Foreign Policy*, 10.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ Dumas, "La politique iranienne du Canada," 635.

(UNSC), the platform for binding economic sanctions.¹⁰ Security Council resolutions 1737 and 1747 were dutifully ratified by the Canadian government.¹¹ Deepak Obhrai declared the economic sanctions on Iran to be “an effective approach in attempting to force Iran to end its uranium enrichment program.”¹² When UNSC resolution 1803 was passed, Canada implemented it into law.¹³ Therefore by March 2008, Canada, in accordance with UN resolutions, had imposed an embargo on exports to Iran of any product or know-how that could assist the enrichment of uranium or the development of nuclear weapons; an assets freeze and a travel ban “against designated persons and entities engaged in Iran's nuclear activities;” a freeze of assets of designated Iranian companies and officials and a withdrawal of financing of trade with Iran.¹⁴

At the 2010 G8 summit held in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada set discussion topics including warnings about Iranian and North Korean nuclear proliferation.¹⁵ In June 2012, John Baird advised his G8 partners who were going to Moscow for a meeting with Iranian representatives regarding its nuclear program to support sanctions until Iran stopped its nuclear program.¹⁶ It's not clear whether Baird's message had a direct effect, but it took place at a time of increasingly stringent sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, led by Obama's initiatives. Canada also took the lead in urging close scrutiny of Iran's nuclear program during its one year presidency of the IAEA, beginning in September 2012.¹⁷

¹⁰ Canada lost the election in 2010 for a UNSC seat. The loss has commonly been blamed on the Harper government's foreign policy positions, especially with respect to its support of Israel.

¹¹ These resolutions targeted nuclear and arms sales towards Iran and introduced asset freezes for certain individuals involved with Iran's nuclear program.

¹² HCD, 5 February 2008, 2638.

¹³ This resolution sought to further punish Iran's refusal to answer questions about its nuclear program, by further restricting material transfers to Iran that could be used for nuclear or military purposes.

¹⁴ HCD, 6 March 2008, 3772.

¹⁵ "Harper says he supports sanctions to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions," *Waterloo Chronicle*, February 10, 2010.

¹⁶ Group of Eight, 2012 G8 Camp David Final Compliance Report: Non-Proliferation Treaty, *G8 Research Group*, 14 June 2013. <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/evaluations/2012compliance/07-12-final-npt.pdf>.

¹⁷ Dumas, "La politique iranienne du Canada," 634.

In June 2010, Stephen Harper personally welcomed the latest UNSC resolutions against Iran's nuclear program.¹⁸ The failure of his government to win a seat on the Security Council that year meant that Canada had no direct ability to write or vote for the motions and could only support them from the sidelines. In July of the same year, Canada applied more sanctions against Iran at the behest of American and Israeli lobbying.¹⁹ Occasionally, Global Affairs Canada press releases and members of the government would refer to Canada's work with likeminded countries to increase sanctions on Iran's nuclear program, but they provided no additional details.²⁰ After Canada's loss at the UNSC election, the Canadian government showed more contempt for the multinational organization. Baird, speaking to the UN General Assembly in 2012 on behalf of Harper, who was also in New York receiving an award from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, warned of worldwide destabilization should Iran get a nuclear weapon and blasted the organization for its inaction on security issues.²¹

The Canadian sanctions regime would occasionally come under fire for being less consistent than Canada's allies; for example, on February 27th, 2012, Liberal MP Dominic LeBlanc accused the Conservatives of doing business with Chinese companies that were barred from doing business in the United States due to their businesses with Iran.²² Foreign Minister John Baird admitted that Canadian sanctions only applied to Canadian companies, but countered that Canada "has worked with [its] allies ... to have some of the toughest sanctions in the world when it comes to Iran ... We are certainly prepared to do anything we can to strengthen those

¹⁸ HCD, 9 June 2010, 3599.

¹⁹ Herb Keinon, "Israel applauds Europe for clamping strong sanctions on Teheran," *Jerusalem Post*, July 27, 2010, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/Inacademic.

²⁰ Canada, , Global Affairs Canada, *Statement by Minister Cannon on Iran Sanctions*, Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon, July 26, 2010, <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/07/statement-minister-cannon-iran-sanctions.html>; Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Canada Further Tightens Sanctions on Iran*, Foreign Minister John Baird, May 29, 2013, <https://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiques/2013/05/29b.aspx?lang=eng>; HCD, 21 November 2011, 3333.

²¹ Dumas, "La politique iranienne du Canada," 635.

²² HCD, 27 February 2012, 5506.

sanctions.”²³ The Conservative government also came under fire from Irwin Cotler for procrastinating for eight years to get a 2005 UNSC nuclear terrorism and safeguards act ratified by Parliament.²⁴

The June 2010 UNSC sanctions were the last binding UN sanctions placed on Iran. Following that, there were annual renewals of expert panels to monitor the sanctions until 2015. Despite this halt in new UN actions, the Harper government continued adding sanctions. Up until the December 11th, 2012 sanctions, the government said they were supposed to align Canada with its allies’ sanctions.²⁵ The Americans also continued placing increasingly harsh sanctions, but they were not described as being coordinated with Canada’s, and none were rolled out in synchronicity. The final Canadian nuclear-related sanctions of May 29th, 2013, mention the sanctions as a punishment for Iran’s failure to respond to negotiations with the P5+1, but they do not say that they were requested by, or coordinated with the group.²⁶ The sanctions policy reflects Harper and Baird’s statements that they wished a peaceful outcome to the crisis and that Canada was using sanctions to pressure Iran to negotiate.²⁷ A key difference between the final Canadian and American sanctions, which were put into place four days later, was the extraterritorial reach of the American sanctions. They were seeking to target worldwide commerce with Iran, whereas the Canadians were trying to limit Iranian trade and activity with

²³ Ibid, 5506.

²⁴ The Canadian version of the act was called S-9. HCD, 7 March 2013, 14717.

²⁵ Canada, Government of Canada, Special Economic Sanctions Act, *Regulations Amending the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations*, P.C. 2013-599, May 28, 2013, <http://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2013/2013-06-19/html/sor-dors108-eng.html>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Canada.²⁸ This reflects the real geopolitical power difference between the two countries: Canada could not effectively police transactions beyond its borders.

Canada did not ease its sanctions after the Joint Plan of Action was signed between Iran and the P5+1. Despite the Canadian government announcing its “appreciation” for the negotiating efforts of its allies in the P5+1, the government announced both to Parliament and in a press release that “its sanctions will remain in full force until real and concrete efforts are taken by the Iranian regime to abandon its nuclear ambitions and allow unfettered access to all its nuclear facilities.”²⁹ NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Paul Dewar criticized the Conservatives for lacking a diplomatic approach towards the Iran nuclear program like Canada’s allies, to which John Baird replied that the government’s position reflected that it did “not have a lot of confidence or a lot of trust in the regime in Tehran.”³⁰ Author Yves Engler, quoted in *Al Jazeera*, noted that Canada was “at least rhetorically ... off-side with Washington and London [on Iran], that is unique. That's somewhat of a historic precedent.”³¹

The course of the P5+1 negotiations with Iran made the cautious, possibly cynical approach of the Canadian government appear justified. Progress towards a final agreement hit significant speed bumps in June 2014, when Iran refused to de-commission its nuclear centrifuges, claiming that the West’s requests on centrifuge reductions were “like a joke and unacceptable.”³² Baird responded to this revelation by declaring to Parliament that “if [Iran]

²⁸ United States of America, Presidential Documents, *Executive Order 13645*, June 3, 2013, 33945, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13645.pdf>; *Regulations Amending the Special Economic Measures (Iran) Regulations, P.C. 2013-599*.

²⁹ *Statement on Iran's Nuclear Program*, Foreign Minister John Baird, November 24, 2013; HCD, 25 November 2013, 1317.

³⁰ HCD, 25 November 2013, 1317.

³¹ Quoted in Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, “Canada and Israel team up against Iran,” *Al Jazeera*, December 6, 2013, US & Canada, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/canada-israel-team-up-against-iran-2013122133949489571.html>

³² Louis Charbonneau and Parisa Hafezi, “Exclusive - Iran digs in heels on nuclear centrifuges at Vienna talks: envoys,” *Reuters*, June 18, 2014, Middle East and North Africa, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-iran->

seeks nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it is essential that [it] heed international calls, do the right thing and get rid of these 20,000 centrifuges.”³³ Baird’s statements during his time as foreign minister show inconsistency. At some points, such as in his 2012 statement to his G7 partners, he urged the complete end to Iran’s nuclear program. Conversely, at other times, such as in his June 18th, 2014, House of Commons statement, he urged the destruction only of Iran’s domestic uranium enrichment capacity, rather than the country’s entire nuclear energy program.

During the federal election of 2015, Harper remarked that his lack of support for the JCPOA was because the Conservative position on Iran’s nuclear program was based on principle, rather than the position of Canada’s allies - a comment an anonymous Western diplomat labeled as “singularly unhelpful, if not insulting,” to the efforts of Western negotiators.³⁴ In his 2018 book *Right Here Right Now*, Harper revealed his opinion of the international negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program, calling them a “farcical” attempt to slow Iran’s nuclear program.³⁵ That same year, in a speech to a Westmount, Quebec synagogue, he warned of nuclear weapons in the hands of “messianic mullahs” claiming the nuclear deal was “woefully inadequate” because it allowed the country to develop delivery systems (missiles) and had a 10 year “sunset” clause on uranium enrichment.³⁶ Harper elucidated that the assumption of the nuclear deal – that Iran would moderate its behaviour if relations were normalized - had proven false.³⁷

[nuclear/exclusive-iran-digs-in-heels-on-nuclear-centrifuges-at-vienna-talks-envoys-idUKKBN0ET1DP20140618](https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/harper-iran-trump-ad-1.4656526) (accessed July 22, 2019).

³³ HCD, 18 June 2014, 7074.

³⁴ Quoted in Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 163.

³⁵ Stephen Harper, *Right Here Right Now: Politics and Leadership in the Age of Disruption* (Toronto: Signal, McClelland and Stewart, 2018), 125.

³⁶ Quoted in Janice Arnold, “Stephen Harper Endorses U.S. Decisions on Iran Deal and Jerusalem,” *Canadian Jewish News*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/stephen-harper-endorses-u-s-decisions-on-iran-deal-and-jerusalem> (accessed July 24th, 2019).

³⁷ Arnold, “Stephen Harper Endorses U.S. Decisions on Iran Deal and Jerusalem”; Catharine Tunney, “You are right about Iran, Stephen Harper and other former PMs tell Trump in ad,” *CBC News*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/harper-iran-trump-ad-1.4656526> (accessed July 25, 2019).

In summary, Stephen Harper's Conservative government was very supportive of working with Canada's Western allies in multinational institutions to increase pressure on Iran and reach a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear question; however, the administration did not go along with its allies rhetorically after they reached first an interim, and then final deal with Iran. This is notable because Cannon had announced in May 2010 that Iran's compliance with the IAEA was the necessary step for Canada to move forward in its relations with Iran. However, when Iran started to comply with the IAEA as a result of the nuclear deals, the Canadian government did not act on its previous words, showing a link between Canada's increasingly strong rhetoric and a changing policy towards Iran's nuclear program.³⁸ The IAEA's full confirmation that Iran was complying with the nuclear deal happened after Harper left office, so it would be sheer speculation to consider what his government would have done at that point.³⁹

Chapter 8: "Canada's an Even Better Friend of Israel than we are"

In 2012, Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz joked that the Harper's administration had made Canada more pro-Israel than his own country was.⁴⁰ The Harper government's relationship with Israel factored heavily into many sources' discussions of Canadian-Iranian relations and Canadian policy towards the Iranian nuclear program. Some sources said Canada's position was based on Israel's needs or Harper's views towards Israel. Former Prime Minister Joe Clark wrote in his 2013 book that Harper's "fierce commitment to Israel also guides

³⁸ "Nuclear inspections in Iran a must: Cannon." *Windsor Star*.

³⁹ As I mentioned earlier, even after Iran was verified to be compliant with the JCPOA on "Implementation Day," February 5th, 2016, some sanctions in SEMA were not lifted by Justin Trudeau's administration due to ongoing concerns about Iran's behaviour, even though they were applied because of fears caused by Iran's nuclear program. Global Affairs Canada, *Canada amends its sanctions against Iran*, February 5th, 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2016/02/canada-amends-its-sanctions-against-iran.html>

⁴⁰ Steven Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau: Rejecting or Reinforcing the Legacy of Stephen Harper?" *American Review of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 1(2018): 86.

Canadian policy on much broader international issues.”⁴¹ To a degree, the Harper government’s strong desire to protect Israel affected Canada’s position towards the Iranian nuclear program.

There isn’t much evidence revealing direct Israeli influence over the Harper administration. Harper and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had a close relationship. Netanyahu referred to Harper as his “good friend Stephen” in a video message and *Canadian Jewish News* reported that Harper had been “delighted” to meet with Netanyahu in New York during at the UN General Assembly in the fall of 2012.⁴² Long-time former Harper staffer Dimitri Soudas described the Harper-Netanyahu relationship as closer than one generally experienced by foreign leaders.⁴³

In the May 2008, Alan Baker, Israel’s outspoken ambassador to Canada, interfered in Canadian domestic politics by warning that Canada’s growing Muslim population would cause a change in Canadian foreign policy, using Liberal MP Omar Alghabra’s apparent “hostility toward Israel” as an example.⁴⁴ Baker’s comment was censured by Stockwell Day, who retorted that Canada was proud of its multiculturalism.⁴⁵ Harper, however, seemed to side with Baker, accusing some MPs of indulging “anti-Israeli sentiment.”⁴⁶ Despite this case, Israel’s involvement in Canadian politics was usually limited to commenting on Canadian actions after-the-fact, usually in warm commendations. For instance, Netanyahu, via twitter, thanked Canada for its “principled position” supporting Israel in its failed attempt to block Palestine from gaining

⁴¹ Joe Clark, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change* (Toronto: Random House, 2013), 84.

⁴² Harper did not actually attend the UNGA that year. Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 325; Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, “Canada and Israel team up against Iran,” *Al Jazeera*, December 6, 2013, US & Canada, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/canada-israel-team-up-against-iran-2013122133949489571.html>; Donald Gutstein, *Harperism: How Stephen Harper and his Think Tank Colleagues have Transformed Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 2014), 244.

⁴³ Kathryn Blaze Carlson, “No greater friend! The bond between Netanyahu and Harper goes beyond statecraft,” *National Post*, December 7, 2012, Canada. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/no-greater-friend-the-bond-between-netanyahu-and-harper-goes-beyond-statecraft>.

⁴⁴ Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 207.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

non-voting observer status at the UN, and after Canada cut diplomatic ties with Iran; Netanyahu called Harper “a great champion of freedom,” telling him that “severing ties with Iran was not only an act of statesmanship but of moral clarity.”⁴⁷

It’s not clear to what extent Harper’s support of Israel was based on close relations with Benjamin Netanyahu and his conservative Likud party. While Harper and Netanyahu share a personal bond and ideological kinship, Harper’s relations were also good with Netanyahu’s predecessor, centrist Ehud Olmert.⁴⁸ One distinct difference in their relationship was that Harper and Olmert never met face-to-face, whereas Netanyahu visited Canada twice, and Harper visited Israel once, in addition to a meeting in New York City.⁴⁹ Colin Robertson proposes that in the end, Harper’s policy did not serve Israeli or Canadian interests, but rather those of Netanyahu and Likud, although he fails to provide information to substantiate this claim.⁵⁰

An Israeli-based group did influence Canadian policy during the Harper years. Mada al-Carmel, a Palestinian/Arab Israeli research institution, had more than \$700,000 in federal grant money cut at the request of the Israeli group NGO Monitor, which had approached members of the Conservative government.⁵¹ Harper’s government, however, did not always feel beholden to Israeli desires. In a notable instance, Canada explicitly ignored the Israeli government’s, and members of Canada’s Israel lobby’s pleas for Canada to refrain from cutting funding to the

⁴⁷ Quoted in “Israeli PM thanks Harper for vote,” *Prince George Citizen*, December 3, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/Inacademic; William Marsden, “Canada will not set ‘red line’ on Iran; Still, Israeli PM Praises Harper’s tough stance,” *Calgary Herald*, September 29, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/Inacademic.

⁴⁸ Oakland Ross, “Olmert hails ‘friend’ Canada,” *Toronto Star*, May 21, 2008, https://www.thestar.com/news/2008/05/21/olmert_hails_friend_canada.html (accessed July 28, 2019).

⁴⁹ Harper planned to visit Israel in 2008, but cancelled due to a corruption scandal involving Olmert. Rhonda Spivak, “Canadian PM cancels visit to Israel due to Olmert probe,” *Haaretz*, June 10, 2008, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.4990291> (accessed July 28, 2019).

⁵⁰ Colin Robertson, “Rising Power: Stephen Harper’s Makeover of Canadian International Policy and Its Institutions,” in *The Harper Factor: Assessing a Prime Minister’s Political Legacy*, eds. Jennifer Ditchburn and Graham Fox (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2016), 112.

⁵¹ David Carment and Joseph Landry, “Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy,” in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada’s Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukuha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 214.

UNRWA, which assists Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip.⁵² In 2013, Canada nearly cut funding for the Palestinian Authority (PA) following its admittance to the UN as a non-voting observer, despite Israel's wishes that the PA remain funded and stable. Canada eventually changed course, reasoning that a wide range of consultations had changed the government's mind.⁵³

Israel factored much more as an indirect influence on the Harper government's positions towards Iran and its nuclear program. The personal concern that important members of the government such as Harper, Day, Baird and Jason Kenney, had for Israel played a significant role in shaping Canada's position on the Iran nuclear program. Their comments and actions throughout the Conservatives' years in power emphasized their worry for the safety and wellbeing of the Jewish state. As this paper has already shown with the withdrawal of funding for the UNRWA, this could include surpassing measures that the Israeli government itself deemed necessary or beneficial, but may have supported the Canadian government's ideology. Another important indirect influence of Israel was the Conservatives' close relationship with certain influential Jewish and pro-Israel lobby groups in Canada, which will be discussed shortly. Also, domestic electoral calculations based on gaining electoral support by defending Israel from outside threats, including Iran, caused Israel to be an indirect influence on the Conservative government.

⁵² The Canadian government was concerned about their money going to Hamas, which was governing the Gaza Strip and is considered a terrorist group by both Canada and Israel. Michael Bell, "Why Canada should restore funding for Palestinian relief agency," *Globe and Mail*, February 12, 2016, Opinion, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/why-canada-should-restore-funding-for-palestinian-relief-agency/article28781261/>; Herb Keinon, "After Six Years, Canada Resumes Funding for the UNRWA," *Jerusalem Post*, November 18, 2016, Israeli Politics, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/After-six-years-Canada-resumes-funding-for-UNRWA-473000>.

⁵³ Lee Berthiaume, "Israel urged Canada not to cut aid to Palestinians over UN recognition," *O Canada.com*, July 9, 2013, <https://o.canada.com/news/israel-urged-canada-not-to-cut-aid-to-palestinians-over-un-recognition> (accessed July 31, 2019).

The elevated concern that Stephen Harper, his Conservative government and certain members of the opposition Liberal Party showed for the safety of Israel played a significant role in Canada's policies against Iran in general and its nuclear program more specifically. As noted by a variety of Canadian scholars, ambassadors and lobbyists, Canadian policies started to be re-oriented towards Israel during the Martin administration; the difference was more in the tone of the Harper administration than a change in policy.⁵⁴ The Martin administration, for example, supported Israel more strongly at the UN than Chrétien had, supporting half the resolutions targeting Israel, rather than the 75% Chrétien had.⁵⁵

Even though Martin's administration had tilted policies in Israel's favour, the Harper administration's actions and words were much stronger. By 2015, the final year of the Harper administration, Canada supported not one UN resolution condemning Israel.⁵⁶ Journalist Marci McDonald reported that some scholars and diplomats considered Harper's staunch backing of Israel the most pronounced shift in Canadian foreign policy since World War Two.⁵⁷ However, former Canadian ambassador to Israel John Allen's comments during a recent university lecture dispute this, saying Canadian policies toward Israel were the same as previous administrations; rather it was the Harper government's rhetoric that changed.⁵⁸ The Harper government's pro-Israeli rhetoric could not have gotten warmer. For instance, while on a trip to Israel as foreign minister, John Baird assured Israel that it had "no better friend in the world than Canada, we

⁵⁴ David Morin and Stéphane Roussel, "Autopsie de la Politique Étrangère de Stephen Harper: Un Examen Préliminaire," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 20, no.1 (2014): 4; Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 40; John Allen, Lecture at the University of Victoria, November 28th, 2018; Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 85; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 146; Shimon Fogel, "Shimon Fogel: Canada's Response is Proportional to the Magnitude of the Threat," *OpenCanada.Org*, April 3, 2012, In Depth, <https://www.opencanada.org/features/shimon-fogel-canadas-response-is-proportional-to-the-magnitude-of-the-threat/>

⁵⁵ Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 86.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁷ Marci McDonald, *Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (Canada: Random House Canada, 2010), 311.

⁵⁸ John Allen, Lecture at the University of Victoria, November 28th, 2018.

shall always be there for you, and in front of you.”⁵⁹ Harper went as far as to say that his “government believes that those who threaten Israel also threaten Canada, because, as the last war showed, hate-fuelled bigotry against some is ultimately a threat to us all.”⁶⁰ This view probably reflects Harper’s understanding of the rise of political anti-Semitism in Europe, and especially in Germany, as linked to a cascade of events leading up to World War Two which ended up threatening liberal democracies across the globe. Harper and Baird were clear when they equated the singling out of Israel for denouncement as a new form of anti-Semitism which used “Israel” as a substitute word for “Jew.”⁶¹

Harper and his foreign ministers explained publicly that their alignment towards Israel was because they thought it was the right thing to do, thus basing their arguments for supporting the Jewish state on moral grounds rather than interests.⁶² They cited their desire to support “the only fully fledged, developed democracy in that part of the world,” emphasizing shared values, a belief that Israel was being unfairly singled out in multinational forums like the UN, and that Israel’s “right to legitimate self defense” was being disregarded or denied by many countries in a massive case of double standards (or anti-Semitism).⁶³ Their arguments do not take into account the complexity of arguments about the proportionality of Israel’s actions. These positions, which were shaped by Harper and Baird’s private beliefs, were important in guiding Canada’s position towards Israel. They were also guided by electoral calculations and to a lesser extent, lobbying.

⁵⁹ Quoted in “Israel has ‘No better friend in the world than Canada,’ John Baird says,” *The Star*, January 30, 2012, Canada, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/01/30/israel_has_no_better_friend_in_the_world_than_canada_john_baird_says.html.

⁶⁰ Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, “A Conservative Foreign Policy? Canada and Australia Compared,” in *Conservatism in Canada*, eds. James Farney and David Rayside (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 153.

⁶¹ Frédéric Boily, “Les conservateurs canadiens, la question d’Israël et l’antisémitisme,” *Études Internationales* 45, no.4 (2014): 593.

⁶² Boily, “Les conservateurs canadiens, la question d’Israël et l’antisémitisme,” 592.

⁶³ Quoted in Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 197; Carlson, “‘No greater friend’: The bond between Netanyahu and Harper goes beyond statecraft.”

Lobbies and interest groups engage in several types of activities to realise their goals: they educate and provide analysis for policy makers, they shape public opinion in a way that fits their vision, and they monitor government policy and try to engage it to suit their objectives.⁶⁴ In Canada, lobbying has a more limited effect than in the United States due to the stricter legislative vote discipline of MPs in the parliamentary system and more regulations surrounding campaign donations.⁶⁵ Additionally, the Canadian bureaucracy is less partisan and open to outside influence than its American counterparts.⁶⁶

Pro-Israel lobbies established a close relationship with members of the Conservative government. Most of these lobbies were run by Canadian Jewish groups. The Canadian Jewish community shares religious, cultural and in many cases, familial ties with Jewish Israelis. The two main Jewish advocacy/lobby groups in Canada are the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA), which coordinates the goals of five agencies: the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canada-Israel Committee, the Quebec-Israel Committee, National Jewish Campus Life, and the University Outreach Committee, and the right-leaning B'nai Brith. Frank Dimant, then executive vice-president of B'nai Brith Canada, developed close contacts with both Stockwell Day, during his tenure as leader of the Canadian Alliance, and the evangelical Christian community.⁶⁷ Since support for Israel was stronger among conservatives in Canada, the Conservative Party was a natural target for Jewish lobbying efforts.⁶⁸ The CIJA's strategy was "to underscore the shared values of an enlightened democracy between Canadians and Israelis

⁶⁴ Sasley and Jacoby, "Canada's Jewish and Arab Communities and Canadian Foreign Policy," 186.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 187.

⁶⁷ The Canadian Alliance merged with the Progressive Conservative Party to form the Conservative Party in 2003. Frank Dimant said that he formed an alliance with evangelical Christian groups because the Canadian Jewish demographic was shrinking, while "anti-Israel forces" in the country were growing. McDonald, *Armageddon Factor*, 322; Harris, *Party of One*, 43; Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193.

⁶⁸ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 194.

and to downplay the significance of whatever the Palestinians were or weren't doing."⁶⁹ CIJA CEO Shimon Fogel remarked that his organization was "enormously appreciative of the support that the (Harper) government has extended to Israel."⁷⁰ Such was the strength of the Harper government's support of Israel that Paul Gecelovsky reported that Canadian Jewish leaders had become concerned the Tory's unflinching support of Israel might "undermine their advocacy efforts vis-à-vis the other political parties," making support of Israel a partisan issue.⁷¹ The left-wing advocacy group Independent Jewish Voices has gone as far as labelling the Conservatives too pro-Israel, accusing them of stifling debate about the country by labelling it as anti-Semitic.⁷²

Sections of Canada's evangelical Christian communities have also been active lobbying a strong pro-Israel message to the Canadian government. Many evangelicals believe that the prophecies of Jesus Christ's return and the End of Days cannot commence until the Jewish people have fully re-established control of their biblical homeland; thus they support Israel and wish it protected from outside threats until all the conditions prophesized are in place.⁷³ Charles McVety, president of Canada Christian College and founder of the Institute for Canadian Values and the Canada Family Action Coalition was a vocal supporter of the Harper administration's positions on Israel.⁷⁴ In the early 2000's, McVety developed strong connections between himself, American Christian Zionist Reverend John Hagee, then leader of the Canadian Alliance,

⁶⁹ Quoted in Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 194.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁷¹ Quoted in Paul Gecelovsky, "The Prime Minister and the Parable: Stephen Harper and Personal Responsibility Internationalism," in *Canada in the World: Perspectives on Canadian Foreign Policy*, ed. by Claire Turenne Sjolander and Heather Smith (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2013), 118.

⁷² Ditchburn, "Harper Says He'll Support Israel Even If It Hurts Canada Politically."

⁷³ "Why Evangelical Christians Love Israel," *Vice News*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fo77sTGpngQ>; McDonald, *Armageddon Factor*, 11, 61, 328; Gutstein, *Harperism*, 241.

⁷⁴ Gecelovsky, "The Prime Minister and the Parable," 119.

Stockwell Day, and the Canadian conservative Jewish community.⁷⁵ He was an important figure setting up both the Hagee-linked Christians United for Israel-Canada and the Canadian Israel Allies Caucus, part of an umbrella group originally established by the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) to rally Christian support for Israel.⁷⁶ Stephen Harper attended the 2007 inauguration of the Canadian Israel Allies Caucus.⁷⁷ According to Lloyd Mackey, these lobby groups served to rally pro-Israel voices among evangelical Christians.⁷⁸ Pollster Conrad Winn's survey corroborated Mackey's assertion of strong evangelical support for Israel, showing churchgoing Christians in Canada were more supportive both of Israel and of Jewish Canadians' religious rights in Canada than "left-wing liberals."⁷⁹

During the July 2008 war between Israel and Hamas, the Canadian Islamic Congress accused the Harper government of supporting Israel by "blindly following the lead of Washington and of the influential pro-Jewish lobby."⁸⁰ However, with an estimated 70 evangelical Christians in the Conservative caucus and McVety calling on Christians to "stand shoulder to shoulder with our Jewish friends in their hour of need," this criticism was not accurate, unless by "pro-Jewish," they meant anyone who supported Jewish people rather than a euphemism for "Jewish lobby."⁸¹

As discussed before, Iran's threats towards Israel created anxiety amongst Canadian Parliamentarians, rallying Parliament to act more strongly against Iran. One of the reactions in

⁷⁵ Lloyd Mackey, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2005), 92; Gecelovsky, "The Prime Minister and the Parable," 119; Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193-195.

⁷⁶ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 195, 199.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁷⁹ It did not specify whether or not Jewish Canadians were part of this poll. Quoted in "Jewish Liberals a Hezbollah casualty?" *Toronto Star*, August 20, 2006, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/inacademic (accessed July 16, 2019); Quoted in Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 198.

⁸¹ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193, 198, 199, 201.

Parliament to Iran's menacing rhetoric towards Israel and (Jewish people) was for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to file a report on Iran in December 2010 called "Ahmadinejad's Iran: A Threat to Peace, Human Rights and International Law." Witness Dr. Hassan-Yari advised Parliament to "not react to the inflammatory words of people like Ahmadinejad" because his threats toward Israel were rhetorical.⁸² Jeffrey McLaren, the director of Gulf and Maghreb Relations, stated Ahmadinejad's words were for domestic consumption and it should be noted they are strictly against Israel rather than Jewish people in general.⁸³ Other witnesses were more alarmist about the threats they perceived to be emanating from Tehran. Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz argued that Ahmadinejad knew his pronouncements would be understood by many as "a call for genocide."⁸⁴ Dershowitz also alleged that former President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani had boasted that an Iranian nuclear attack on Israel would "kill as many as five million Jews," whereas "Iran would only lose fifteen million people" in the Israeli retaliation, "a small sacrifice."⁸⁵ There is no solid evidence that Rafsanjani actually said this.⁸⁶ Dershowitz appealed that the threat from Iran was "unprecedented," due to the religious, "suicidal" nature of the Iranian regime, in combination with its genocidal bent and its potential to develop nuclear weapons.⁸⁷ Professor Gregory Stanton, president of Genocide Watch reported that Ahmadinejad had said it was good that Jews had "concentrated themselves in the state of Israel, because it would make wiping them out easier."⁸⁸ There is no information to substantiate that Ahmadinejad had said this quote. Stanton went on to state that Iran's threats

⁸² Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, *Ahmadinejad's Iran*, 52.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸⁶ The oldest source quoting it is this one: Suzanne Fields, "Confronting the new anti-Semitism," *Washington Times*, July 24, 2004, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/jul/24/20040724-105243-9684r/> (accessed July 14, 2019).

⁸⁷ *Ahmadinejad's Iran*, 56.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

were a violation of the UN charter and that quick action was needed to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.⁸⁹

That Parliament had made a report on Ahmadinejad's Iran was not unique; Parliament regularly issues reports on human rights situations in foreign countries. The 40th Parliament also issued reports on human rights in Pakistan, Tanzania and specifically on the Baha'i in Iran, as well as on the situation in Afghanistan, the referendum in Sudan and the case of Omar Khadr. The report was significant because some of the witnesses, such as Dershowitz and Stanton, issued alarming, albeit poorly substantiated, assessments of Iran's danger which could have influenced Canadian Members of Parliament's calculations of just how dangerous Iran would be with nuclear weapons.

Iranian threats against Israel, such as publically displaying banners saying "Israel should be wiped off the face of the world" often caught the attention of Canadian Parliamentarians.⁹⁰ Thus even if it is unlikely that a nuclear-armed Iran would actually use these weapons against Israel, aggressive Iranian statements triggered Baird and Harper to make claims that Iran would be ready and willing to use nuclear weapons against Israel. Baird and Harper's statements in turn were condemned as excessive and belligerent by disarmament advocate Ernie Regehr, Trita Parsi, head of the National Iranian American Council, international affairs professor Roland Paris, and John Mundy, a former Canadian ambassador to Iran.⁹¹ One of their main messages was that the Iranian government was not suicidal, and it was not helpful to say they were.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56-57

⁹⁰ Mackey, "Israeli Minister Agrees Ahmadinejad Never Said Israel 'Must Be Wiped Off the Map'"; HCD, 14 May 2012, 8044, 8052.

⁹¹ Roland Paris would become Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's foreign and defense policy advisor from 2015-2016. Lee Berthiaume, "Harper stirs 'hysteria' on Iran, expert warns," *Vancouver Sun*, February 15, 2012, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; Roland Paris, "Stephen Harper's Worrying Words on Iran," *OpenCanada.Org*, January 21, 2012, In Depth, https://www.opencanada.org/features/harper_iran/; John Mundy, "Tone down the rhetoric on Iran; Tehran's leaders are neither irrational nor suicidal - Canada's role is diplomatic, not

Harper's strong support of Israel and strong opposition to the government of Iran cannot be explained only by the influence of the Israeli government and lobby groups. Academic and other sources without overt political motives usually cite Harper's worldview and deeply held opinions about historical justice for the Jewish people, some of which were imparted upon him in childhood, as important influences on his policies towards Israel and also by extension, Iran.⁹² These sources are supported by the observations of friends and acquaintances of Harper. Stephen Joseph Harper was born on April 30th, 1959 in Leaside, Ontario, a suburb of Toronto. Growing up, his world view was strongly influenced by his father, Joe Harper, who thought foreign policy should be conducted by values and not realpolitik.⁹³ Joe, who was always against intolerance, was deeply impacted by stories from his co-worker and friend, Harvey Gellman, a Polish Jew who had immigrated to Canada before World War Two, but had lost many relatives in the Holocaust.⁹⁴ Joe became convinced that the Jewish people had the right to a homeland, and instructed Stephen and his two brothers to help the Jewish people whenever they could.⁹⁵

Stephen Harper did not grow up in a religiously conservative household. His family were members of the United Church, and then the Presbyterian Church after they moved homes.⁹⁶ As a teen and young adult, Harper was an agnostic.⁹⁷ While working on his master's degree in economics in the mid-late 1980's, Harper settled on joining the Christian and Missionary

confrontational, says former envoy John Mundy," *Globe and Mail*, February 23, 2012,

www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic; Regehr, "Tone down rhetoric on Iran nuclear question."

⁹² Adam Chapnick, "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy," in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 106; Ron Csillag, "Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel's staunchest supporters?" *Times of Israel*, January 18, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-is-stephen-harper-one-of-israels-staunchest-supporters/> (accessed July 24th, 2019); Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 155; Kestler-D'Amours, "Canada and Israel team up against Iran"; Mark Gollom, "Harper's support for Israel: Political, philosophical or both?" *CBC News*, December 7, 2012, Canada, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/harper-s-support-for-israel-political-philosophical-or-both-1.1206070> (Accessed July 25th, 2019).

⁹³ Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 12, 323; Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 8.

⁹⁴ Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 12.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁶ Mackey, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper*, 121.

⁹⁷ Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 140-141.

Alliance evangelical Protestant church, choosing a large congregation because it allowed him to attend “anonymously and infrequently.”⁹⁸ The Alliance churches are “energetic, youth-friendly, outreaching” congregations, but they are not charismatic movements and do not hold especially strong Zionist views.⁹⁹ Harper labelled himself a “conservative Christian;” journalists John Ibbitson and Lloyd Mackey state that he is not a fundamentalist and that it is a conspiracy theory that Harper’s support for Israel is linked an apocalyptic belief.¹⁰⁰ Since his early days in Preston Manning’s Reform Party, Harper has been a restraint against extreme social conservatives.¹⁰¹

Harper’s conservative viewpoints on foreign policy also led him to support Israel because it was the only democracy in a sea of “sham democracies, theocracies and dictatorships.”¹⁰²

Gerry Nichols, who worked with Harper in the conservative think-tank National Citizens Coalition before Harper became leader of the Canadian Alliance, said Harper would express his strong support for Israel in terms of it being an upholder of “Western values.”¹⁰³ Shimon Fogel, who knows Harper well, said Harper’s stance on Israel is “guided by ideological moral certainty.”¹⁰⁴ James Devine notes Harper’s black and white view of the world clearly revealed theocratic Iran as a “bad guy.”¹⁰⁵ In his January 20th, 2014 speech to the Israeli Knesset, Harper

⁹⁸ Ibid., 141-142.

⁹⁹ Mackey, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper*, 63; Csillag, “Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel’s staunchest supporters?”

¹⁰⁰ Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 142-143; Mackey, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper*, 70; Gecelovsky, “The Prime Minister and the Parable,” 111; Csillag, “Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel’s staunchest supporters?”; Gollom, “Harper's support for Israel.”

¹⁰¹ John Malloy, “The Relationship between the Conservative Party of Canada and Evangelicals and Social Conservatives,” in *Conservatism in Canada*, eds. James Farney and David Rayside (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 191; Bloomfield and Nossal, “A Conservative Foreign Policy? 148; Ibbitson, *Stephen Harper*, 143-144; Mackey, *The Pilgrimage of Stephen Harper*, 91.

¹⁰² During Harper’s time in office, the Middle East had very few functioning democracies, and especially before 2011, was known as a region of despotism. Jeffrey Simpson, “How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada,” *Globe and Mail*, September 28, 2011, Opinion, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/how-the-political-shift-among-jewish-voters-plays-in-canada/article4199522/>; John Ibbitson, *The Big Break: The Conservative Transformation of Canada's Foreign Policy* (Waterloo: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2014), 15.

¹⁰³ Gollom, “Harper's support for Israel.”

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 156.

¹⁰⁵ Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, “Canada and Israel team up against Iran.”

listed many reasons for his, and Canada's, support for Israel which corroborate the above statements. He said the friendship between the two countries was fostered by shared values and supported by economic, political and military links.¹⁰⁶ He elaborated that the shared values lay in Israel being the only country in the Middle East that had "long anchored itself in the ideals of freedom, democracy and the rule of law."¹⁰⁷ Harper went on to emphasize that Canada must stand up for its values and interests by supporting Israel or face the waning of those values.¹⁰⁸

The Conservative administration's foreign policy decisions were often directed by Harper; yet, John Baird, as foreign minister from 2011-2015, established trust with the Prime Minister because he had a strong interest in Middle Eastern politics and history, was well travelled in the region, and listened carefully to the views of Canada's friends in the region, such as Israel, Jordan and Egypt.¹⁰⁹ Baird explained his pro-Israel views stemmed from the influence of his grandfather, who fought Nazi Germany in World War Two.¹¹⁰ Unlike his Conservative predecessors as foreign minister, Baird avoided condemning Israel's settlement construction in the West Bank because he didn't want to "pile on" Israel.¹¹¹

Some of Harper's pro-Western values views, as well as his apparent dog-whistles about Iran's "evil ideology" may be explained by reference to Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis. In his 1993 thesis, Huntington theorized that in the post-Cold War world, the most dangerous conflicts would be driven by cleavages and rivalries between the different

¹⁰⁶ "Read the full text of Harper's historic speech to Israel's Knesset," *Globe and Mail*, January 20, 2014, Politics, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/read-the-full-text-of-harpers-historic-speech-to-israels-knesset/article16406371/> (accessed October 17, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Oliver Santín Peña, "La Política Exterior Canadiense en el Gobierno de Stephen Harper: Entre la Convicción y la Polémica," *Norteamérica* 10, no. 2 (July 2015): 134; Gecelovsky, "The Prime Minister and the Parable," 115; Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 43; Chapnick, "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy," 110.

¹¹⁰ Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 152.

¹¹¹ Israeli settlements in the West Bank are obstacles to a two-state peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, which is the Canadian policy. In Parliament, Baird publically supported the two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, which would probably require uprooting Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Quoted in Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 87.

civilizations on Earth, such as Western civilization, Islamic civilization and Confucian civilization.¹¹² According to Huntington, Western civilization, characterized by Protestant and Catholic Christianity and liberal democratic values, has, and will continue to clash with Islamic civilizations due to incompatible notions of political rule on one hand (i.e. Christianity has separate religious and secular rulers whereas power is united in Islam) and too many competing similarities on the other hand, such as the notion of being universal religions, and their expansionary and proselytizing tendencies.¹¹³ Interestingly, Huntington's thesis said that conflicts between Islam and the West would revolve around intercivilizational issues such as weapons proliferation and human rights, which were the two largest disputes that the Harper government had with the Iranian government.¹¹⁴ Another part of Huntington's thesis fits into this paper's findings is his assertion that the West would use weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation initiatives and the promotion of western values and institutions to defend its interests.¹¹⁵

Former Al Qaida leader Osama bin Laden's intention was to provoke a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam.¹¹⁶ Although bin Laden's most notorious attack was on the United States on September 11th, 2001, he ascribed some of his motivation for the attack to American support for Israel.¹¹⁷ American President George W. Bush responded to bin Laden's attacks by declaring a "war to save civilization itself."¹¹⁸ According to some Reform Jewish rabbis, American Christian Zionist John Hagee was deliberately trying to stoke tensions with

¹¹² Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22-25.

¹¹³ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 210.

¹¹⁴ He also mentioned control of oil, migration, terrorism and Western interventions as other intercivilizational issues. *Ibid.*, 212.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 185-186.

¹¹⁶ Richard Bonney, *False Prophets: The 'Clash of Civilizations' and the Global War on Terror* (Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd., 2008), x.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Bonney, *False Prophets*, x.

Muslims in order to provoke a conflict over Israel that could bring about Armageddon.¹¹⁹

Hagee's Christians United for Israel (CUFI) website declared that Ahmadinejad was the new Adolf Hitler and that he was making acquiring nuclear weapons to destroy both Israel and America.¹²⁰ The website went on to say that "when a madman threatens genocide *we must take him seriously*," a statement John Baird would echo in his own pronouncements against Iran five years later.¹²¹

There is no evidence that Harper supported this religiously apocalyptic version of the "Clash of Civilizations." However, the importance of democracy and "Western values" in Harper's rhetorical support of Israel against Iran's "malevolent ideology," show his civilizational awareness: an ideological commitment to "the West," and possibly some sort of antipathy towards "Islamic civilization."¹²² His comments on the Iranian government's "ideology" can be read as religion, since the state ideology is Islamic republican, a semi-theocratic form of rule. These comments may have been dog-whistles to his evangelical base about the perceived dangers of Islam and/or the need to protect Israel or "the West." During his time as prime minister, Harper, with very few exceptions (most of which were during the 2015 federal election), avoided broad and overt hostile statements against Islam as a religion.¹²³ His electoral strategy

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 114.

¹²⁰ CUFI is the biggest pro-Israel lobby in the United States of America. "Why Evangelical Christians Love Israel," *Vice News*; Bonney, *False Prophets*, 115.

¹²¹ Richard Bonney accessed this statement from the CUFI website on May 31st, 2007. Bonney, *False Prophets*, 115; Den Tandt, "Canada must step softly with nuclear Iran."

¹²² Jewish civilization wasn't included specifically as its own civilization due to its small size, nor was it part of "the West," in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. Nevertheless, the common values that Harper cited between Canada and Israel would make it associated with the West in this context. Levitt, "Canada PM Sees Iran as 'Clear and Present Danger'."

¹²³ There were several incidents during the 2015 federal election where Harper's statements or policies were seen to be Islamophobic to some degree. His "old stock Canadian" comment was thought to be a dog-whistle, possibly against Muslim refugees, especially Syrians. His announcement that he wanted to create a "zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices" act was intended to protect people in conflict zones and in Canada, mostly women and victims of human smuggling, but could be seen as targeting Muslims. Harper's threat to ban niqabs from citizenship oath events was targeting deeply religious Muslim women. "Harper's 'old-stock Canadians' line is part deliberate strategy: pollster," *CBC News*, September 18, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/harper-old-stock->

included trying to win votes from the Canadian Iranian Muslim community and heterodox Islamic sects such as the Ismailis and Ahmadiyyas.¹²⁴ This would not work if he took wide and open anti-Islamic positions.

Economically, it made sense for the Harper government to support Israel and take a hard line against Iran. In 2014, Canadian exports to Iran were valued at only \$67 million, down from a high of \$772 million in 1997 and an average of \$250 million from 2003-2007.¹²⁵ By contrast, Canadian trade with Israel featured an expanded free-trade agreement under Harper and grew from \$507.3 million in 1996 to \$1.4 billion in 2012, making Israel a much more important economic partner for Canada.¹²⁶

Although Harper and members of his government had close relations with the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu and Jewish and Christian lobbyists in Canada, these groups don't appear so much to have directed his policies as supported and encouraged the direction he had consistently taken throughout his decade in power. This direction was informed by Harper and Baird's long standing beliefs that supporting Israel, especially against dictatorships and being singled out, was a just action. This strong affinity for Israel increased the Harper government's antipathy towards Iran and provoked some of the administration's more extreme rhetoric. Although previous Canadian governments had usually given Israel strong support, they

[canadians-debate-1.3233615](#) (accessed July 28, 2019); Lucas Powers, "Conservatives pledge funds, tip line to combat 'barbaric cultural practices'," *CBC News*, October 2, 2016, Politics, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-barbaric-cultural-practices-law-1.3254118> (accessed July 28, 2019); "Stephen Harper 'playing a very divisive game' with niqabs, Tom Mulcair says," *CBC News*, September 21, 2015, Politics, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-niqab-bloc-1.3236837> (accessed July 28, 2019).

¹²⁴ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193, 207.

¹²⁵ "Canada lifts economic sanctions against Tehran after nuclear deal," *The Guardian*, February 5, 2016, Canada <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/05/canada-lifts-economic-sanctions-tehran-iran-nuclear-deal>; Bookmiller, *Engaging Iran*, 130.

¹²⁶ Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 84.

do not seem to have tied it so closely to their policies on Iran.¹²⁷ There is also significant evidence that electoral calculations also played a role in the Conservative's positions vis-à-vis Israel and Iran.

Chapter 9: “A Free Kick:” The Link between Canada’s Domestic Politics and Iran Policies

Many scholars dispute the extent to which Harper's foreign policy was determined by domestic policy. This chapter will examine this debate and show that domestic policy had a moderately significant effect on Canada's policy towards the Iran nuclear program. The domestic cost of opposing Iran was low. One observer noted that criticizing Iran was a “free kick” in Canadian politics.¹²⁸ The Conservative Party's electoral strategy involved a lot of outreach to a wide range of ethnic communities in Canada. During its five years as a minority government, the Conservatives would craft foreign policy to target specific domestic constituencies at the riding level.¹²⁹ The mastermind behind this outreach program was Jason Kenney, who worked with many ethnic communities to bring them into the Conservative fold. Former Harper advisor Tom Flanagan noted that since the Conservative Party's traditional Anglo-Protestant base was not large enough to win elections anymore, the Conservative Party started working in the suburbs of Canadian cities such as Vancouver and Toronto to recruit “natural conservative” voters from ethnicities with “capitalist work ethic[s],” especially ethnic Chinese, Korean, Jewish, Hindu, Persian (Iranian), Italian and Vietnamese Canadians.¹³⁰ According to David Carment and Joseph Landry, Conservative politicians showed favouritism towards some ethnic groups at the expense

¹²⁷ For Canada's voting record at the UN, see Sarah Tayyem, “Canadian Foreign Policy: An Exploration of Israel and Canada as ‘Best Friends’,” (MA major research paper, University of Ottawa, 2014), 70-73.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Bookmiller, “Canada, Iran and “Controlled Engagement,” 30.

¹²⁹ Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha, “Introduction,” in *The Harper Era in Canadian Foreign Policy: Parliament, Politics, and Canada's Global Posture*, eds. Adam Chapnick and Christopher Kukucha (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 17.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 191-192.

of others and supported ethnic nationalism, which could serve to damage Canadian national identity and expose Canada to foreign interference.¹³¹

One thing that was very apparent while examining the link between the Harper government's foreign policy and domestic politics was that there was a large crossover constituency that supported both Canada's rock solid support of Israel, and its forceful rhetoric against Iran. The largest part of this group, evangelical Christians, were already strong backers of the Conservative party, the second, the Canadian Jewish community, moved to support the Conservatives much more than they had in the past.¹³² The third relevant constituency that Harper's government targeted in these sets of policies, the Iranian Canadian community, was principally concerned with Canada's Iran policy, and especially with the issue of human rights in Iran.

Most literature examining the links between the domestic and foreign policies of Harper's government looked at Jewish Canadians and their links to Harper's Israel and Iran policies. Nevertheless, evangelical Christians form a much larger segment of the Canadian population, comprising something between 2.5 million and 4 million Canadians, compared to the approximately 371,000 Jewish Canadians.¹³³ Support for Harper's Conservatives among Canadian Protestant Christians in the 2011 was 55%, although evangelicals aren't distilled from this number, one can assume that support from conservative Protestants such as evangelicals would have been even higher.¹³⁴ John Malloy asserts that evangelicals' concerns, including their

¹³¹ Carment and Landry, "Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy," 210-211.

¹³² McDonald, *Armageddon Factor*, 35.

¹³³ There are 2.5 million evangelical Christians in Canada according Barry in "Canada and the Middle East Today," 195; 3.5 million according to Yves Engler in *The Ugly Canadian: Stephen Harper's Foreign Policy* (Vancouver: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 114; and 4 million according to Gutstein in *Harperism*, 241.

¹³⁴ Douglas Todd, "How religion split the federal vote; Conservatives won religious voters; the NDP did well with visible minorities," *The Vancouver Sun*, May 9, 2011, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

support for Israel, were inserted into the Harper government's foreign policies.¹³⁵ This is natural that evangelical concerns would be implanted in the party's policies since they are a core constituency. Also, Israel served as a factor which could unify Western Canadian "Reform" conservatives with Central Canadian "Progressive Conservatives," since many of the socially conservative elements of the Conservative Party platform favoured by evangelicals were removed when the Canadian Alliance merged with the Progressive Conservatives in 2003.¹³⁶

Jewish Canadians make up a relatively small constituency in Canada, totalling approximately one percent of the national population; however, the desire to attract the "Jewish vote" has been an important point of study of the Conservative Party's foreign policy. Canadian Jews are well established in Canada's economic and political system and many have a strong identification with Israel.¹³⁷ According to former Liberal Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, himself Jewish, Israel is one of the top 3 issues Canadian Jews vote on.¹³⁸ Throughout Canada's recent history, Canadian Jews have strongly supported the Liberal Party of Canada; for example, Jewish support for the Liberals was 20% above the national average in the 1970s.¹³⁹ The Liberals were seen as the party of multiculturalism and diversity. Other governments with pro-Israel policies, such as Joe Clark's and Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives were unable to pry significant numbers of Jewish voters from the Liberals.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Malloy, "The Relationship between the Conservative Party of Canada and Evangelicals and Social Conservatives," 196.

¹³⁶ The Reform Party became the Canadian Alliance. The base of this party had strong social conservative and evangelical representation. Boily, "Les conservateurs canadiens, la question d'Israël et l'antisémitisme," 590.

¹³⁷ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 192.

¹³⁸ Cotler did not specify what the other top issues were in this article. Judy Maltz, "Will Trudeau's Canada Still Support Israel?" *Haaretz*, February 2, 2016, Jewish World, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-will-trudeau-s-canada-still-support-israel-1.5398972>.

¹³⁹ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 195; Simpson, "How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada."

¹⁴⁰ Simpson, "How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada."

Certain ridings, especially Thornhill, near Toronto, Mount Royal in Montreal and Winnipeg South Center have high concentrations of Jews, so winning Jewish votes could result in these ridings swinging from Liberal to Conservative.¹⁴¹ Appealing to shared conservative social values with religious Jews, and unwavering support for Israel during that country's summer 2006 war with Hezbollah in Lebanon and its winter 2008-2009 war with Hamas in Gaza, caused sections of Jewish voters to be won over by the Tories, including some high profile Liberal supporters within the community such as film producer Robert Lantos, Onex (investment management) founder and CEO Gerald Schwartz, and Indigo founder and CEO Heather Reisman.¹⁴² Even Irwin Cotler's wife Ariela Cotler quit the party following Liberal leadership candidate Michael Ignatieff's comment accusing Israel of a war crime following the killing of 29 Lebanese civilians in an Israeli aerial bombing.¹⁴³ The Tories tried to press their gains through fundraising, asking supporters (including Canadian Jews won over by its stand for Israel) for "a special contribution of \$150 or \$75 ... to keep the focus on principle and character and Canada's return to its place in the world" after the war with Hezbollah.¹⁴⁴ The government was accused by the Liberals and NDP of trying to turn a profit from a foreign crisis.¹⁴⁵ Such was the enthusiasm for Harper's defense of Israel that B'nai B'rith's Frank Dimant predicted "several ovations" for Harper's speech at the organization's annual gala, which was selling sponsorship packages for up to one million dollars.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Gutstein, *Harperism*, 240.

¹⁴² Graeme Hamilton, "Jewish voters face 'moment of truth': Will Harper's pro-Israel stand earn Tories votes?" *National Post*, October 18, 2006, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/inacademic; Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 201-202.

¹⁴³ Hamilton, "Jewish voters face 'moment of truth.'"

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 201.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 203-204; Hamilton, "Jewish voters face 'moment of truth.'"

The Conservatives used Thornhill, the riding with the highest concentration of Jewish people (37%) in the nation, as a test case for their ethnic outreach strategy, keeping a database of ethnic electors and advocating issues important to the Jewish community.¹⁴⁷ The strategy appeared to be successful; Conservative Peter Kent won the Thornhill riding from the Liberal incumbent Susan Kadis in the October 2008 federal election. Once he took his seat in the house, Kent used stalwartly pro-Israel rhetoric, even declaring to a Toronto Jewish magazine when discussing Iran that “an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on Canada,” a statement which the Prime Minister’s Office later said reflected Harper’s views.¹⁴⁸ Overall in the 2008 elections, the Conservative Party lost ground in Vancouver and Winnipeg ridings with substantial Jewish populations, and failed to break into the core areas of Toronto and Montreal. Nevertheless, the Conservatives increased its overall share of the vote in ridings with high Jewish populations and gained a stronger minority government.¹⁴⁹ There appears to be few wider electoral consequences for the Tories taking an unpopular position in the Lebanon War even though only 32% of Canadians agreed with Harper’s support of Israel in the conflict while 45% disagreed; more than three quarters of Canadians thought their country should have been neutral in the war, despite the fact that Hezbollah was designated a terrorist group by Ottawa and had started the conflict by ambushing Israeli soldiers.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps this was due to the level of destruction Israel laid on Lebanon as a response for the kidnapping. Clearly for most Canadians, despite their personal opinions on the matter, Canada’s position on Israel’s conflicts with its neighbours was not a priority when it came to voting.

¹⁴⁷ Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 192-193.

¹⁴⁸ Kent later denied that he meant that Canada would go to war with Iran if it attacked Israel. Seligman, “Canada’s Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau,” 86; Chapnick, “Stephen Harper’s Israel Policy,” 108; Gutstein, *Harperism*, 241.

¹⁴⁹ Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 208.

¹⁵⁰ J.L. Granatstein, *Whose War is it? How Canada can Survive in the Post-9/11 World* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007), 167.

By the election of 2011, Harper's team had convinced many Canadian Jewish voters that their positions on Israel were genuine. According to an Ipsos Reid exit poll, 52% of Canadian Jews voted Conservative, 24% voted Liberal and 16% voted NDP.¹⁵¹ Harper's Conservatives won the election with their first majority government, showing either that its Middle East policies were helping it, or at least not hurting it. Possibly not enough voters cared about these political positions to allow them to deter them from voting Conservative. The answer to this question is occluded. David Morin and Stéphane Roussel assert that Harper's Israel policy did not give the Conservatives an electoral advantage federally.¹⁵² An article by the *Times of Israel* on Harper's Israel policies claimed the swing in Jewish votes only helped the Conservatives in 10 of 308 ridings.¹⁵³ John Baird declared that Canada's protective policies towards Israel were not based on the Jewish diaspora, noting that his own riding had 2,800 Jews and 11,500 Arabs and Muslims.¹⁵⁴ It appears Harper was aware that his Israel policies might not be to his electoral advantage, in a speech opening a conference on anti-Semitism, he declared that "There are, after all, a lot more votes - a lot more - in being anti-Israel than in taking a stand."¹⁵⁵ A 2012 BBC poll seemed to support Harper's assertion, showing Israel as being viewed favourably by 25% of Canadians and negatively by 59% of Canadians surveyed.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, the same poll revealed that Iran was even more unpopular among Canadians, with a 9% favourable and 81%

¹⁵¹ 39% of Canadians overall supported the Conservatives. Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 86.

¹⁵² Morin and Roussel, "Autopsie de la Politique Étrangère de Stephen Harper," 6.

¹⁵³ Csillag, "Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel's staunchest supporters?"

¹⁵⁴ Chapnick, "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy," 106.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Ditchburn, "Harper Says He'll Support Israel Even If It Hurts Canada Politically."

¹⁵⁶ BBC World Service Poll, PIPA, 10 May 2012,

https://globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2012_country_ratings/2012_bbc_country%20rating%20final%20080512.pdf.

unfavourable rating, so having policies which favoured protecting Israel from Iranian threats still could have been electorally beneficial.¹⁵⁷

In the end, Harper's Israel policies may not have mattered to Canadian Jewish voters significantly more than some of his other policies, or the Jewish community was swayed by new Liberal leader Justin Trudeau's promise that his positions on Israel were no different from those of the Conservatives.¹⁵⁸ In the 2015 federal election, Trudeau won back many of the Toronto-area constituencies that had supported Harper in 2011, with the Conservative share of the Jewish vote dropping to somewhere between an estimated 35 and 45 percent of their total votes cast.¹⁵⁹

In a country with more than twice as many Muslims as Jews, Harper's pro-Israel policies mathematically carried a large amount of risk; however, according to Martin and Sasley and Jacoby, the Canadian Muslim community was less organized and "impactful" than the Canadian Jewish community.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the Arab Canadian community has been established in Canada for less time than the Jewish community, and is divided by national origin and religion, making it difficult for them to present a unified front, according to Donald Barry.¹⁶¹ Barry also claims that Tory strategists wrote off the Arab Canadian community in their electoral calculations, with the exception of certain religious minorities within their community.¹⁶² The Canadian-Islamic Congress and the Canadian Arab Federation both claim to have been snubbed in their attempts to meet with Harper and MacKay following the 2006 between Hezbollah and

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Lungen, "Can Tories Hold on to Jewish Voters?" *Canadian Jewish News*, January 13, 2016, Canada, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/can-tories-hold-on-to-jewish-voters>.

¹⁵⁹ Total national Conservative support was 32%. Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 161; Maltz, "Will Trudeau's Canada Still Support Israel?"; Lungen, "Can Tories Hold on to Jewish Voters?"

¹⁶⁰ Lawrence Martin, *Harperland: The Politics of Control* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2010), 81; Sasley and Jacoby, "Canada's Jewish and Arab Communities and Canadian Foreign Policy," 188.

¹⁶¹ The Arab Canadian community is mostly Muslim. Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193.

¹⁶² Specifically Ismaili and Ahmadiyya Muslims. In 2014, the Aga Khan, leader of the Ismailis, was the first faith leader to speak to a joint session of Parliament in Canada. Ismaili Islam, press release, *Aga Khan lauds Canada's leadership in advancing pluralism in the world, warns against rise of extremism*, February 27, 2014, <https://www.akdn.org/press-release/aga-khan-lauds-canadas-leadership-advancing-pluralism-world-warns-against-rise>; Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 193, 207.

Israel.¹⁶³ Khaled Mouammar, president of the Canadian Arab Federation said he was encouraging members of the federation to vote for politicians who stood for “truth and justice.”¹⁶⁴ The Ottawa-based National Council on Canada-Arab Relations reported having had two fruitful meetings with Foreign Minister Peter MacKay, however, its executive director Mazen Chouaib doubted MacKay’s influence in foreign policy decisions, saying they rested with Harper.¹⁶⁵

The Conservative Party attempted to build a bridge to the Arab community by appointing Muslim MP Wajid Khan, of Pakistani ancestry, as special advisor on South Asian and Middle Eastern issues, but this was met with suspicion by the Canadian Arab Federation, who called the act a “charade” due to Khan’s limited knowledge of the Middle East.¹⁶⁶ The appointment of Khan to this position may have been just to entice him to cross the floor to the Conservative Party. Alternatively, it might have reflected either the Conservative Party’s ignorance about important issues for Canadian Arabs and Muslims originating from the Middle East (except Iran), or more likely, its lack of concern for them, since they had already been written off in the Conservative’s electoral calculations. In the end, the Canadian Arab and Muslim communities generally did not lean towards Harper’s Conservatives. An Ipsos Reid exit poll from the 2011 election counted only 12% of Muslims supporting the Conservatives, while 46% supported the Liberals and 38% the NDP.¹⁶⁷ Overall electoral participation in the community was low, with only 30% of one million Canadian Muslims voting in the election, perhaps a number the

¹⁶³ Mike Blanchfield, “Canadian Arabs, Muslims threaten to punish Tories in next election,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 25, 2007, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/242104430?accountid=14846> (accessed July 21, 2019).

¹⁶⁴ Mouammar’s “truth and justice” position should be interpreted as having a pro-Palestinian position. Quoted in Blanchfield, “Canadian Arabs, Muslims threaten to punish Tories in next election.”

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Barry, “Canada and the Middle East Today,” 205.

¹⁶⁷ Simpson, “How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada.”

Conservatives were predicting while researching ethnic constituencies in their electoral calculations.¹⁶⁸

The nearly 200,000 person-strong Iranian Canadian community was one of the other groups targeted by the Conservative's electoral strategy.¹⁶⁹ One might think that a hard line against Iran would alienate this community, but in fact it did quite the opposite. Like the Jewish Canadian community, Iranian Canadians had traditionally supported the Liberals and were concentrated in key ridings in the Toronto and Vancouver areas.¹⁷⁰ Many Iranian Canadians had views which went against the government of Iran or were from persecuted religious minority groups such as the Baha'i; still a significant minority were "pro-regime."¹⁷¹ The strength of anti-regime views in the Iranian Canadian community was on display when more than 5,000 members showed up for a protest against the Iranian government's suppression of protests at Queen's Park in Toronto on June 21st, 2009.¹⁷² Jason Kenney, Harper and Tory MPs with significant Iranian Canadian constituencies such as John Weston of West Vancouver, worked hard in community outreach, celebrating *Nowruz* (New Year) with the community and condemning human rights violations by the Iranian government, especially against dual citizens, the Baha'i and other religious minorities.¹⁷³ Kenney tried to impress the community by

¹⁶⁸The national average voter turnout was 61.1%. Elections Canada, *Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums*, <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=turn&document=index&lang=e§ion=ele>; "The Canadian-Muslim Vote, other groups rallying Muslim voters," *CBC News*, September 18, 2015, Toronto, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/the-canadian-muslim-vote-other-groups-rallying-muslim-voters-1.3235122> (accessed July 28, 2019).

¹⁶⁹ Douglas Todd, "Fearing the theocracy; Iranians living here reluctant to talk about persecution of Baha'is," *Vancouver Sun*, December 31, 2016, Opinion, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lnacademic.

¹⁷⁰ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 43.

¹⁷¹ Todd, "Fearing the theocracy."

¹⁷² Cameron McLellan, "Canadian Iranian Community Makes a Strong Showing," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 28, no. 6 (2009): 55–56.

<http://ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=43347419&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

¹⁷³ "Stephen Harper expresses hope for an Iran 'free from tyranny'," *The Daily Gleaner* (New Brunswick), March 23, 2015, www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lnacademic.

commenting on the rise in permanent residents Canada was accepting from Iran under his government: 11,000 in 2014, up from 5,000 in 2005.¹⁷⁴

Lobbying by victims of terrorism within the Iranian Canadian community helped push forward the JVTA, which would allow them to sue governments associated with terrorist groups (such as the Iranian government).¹⁷⁵ The Canadian government's severing of relations with Iran in July 2012 imposed hardship on Iranian Canadians, making it more difficult for them to visit Iran and do business with the country.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, some members of the community were supportive of these actions, seeing it as the fault of the Iranian government and expressing concern for Canadian national security.¹⁷⁷ The Iran Democratic Association said it welcomed the closure of the Iranian embassy in Ottawa, noting it was used to harass Iranians in Canada.¹⁷⁸ Peter MacKay's wife, Iranian Canadian and human rights activist Nazanin Afshin-Jam, had also been pushing for the embassy closure.¹⁷⁹ In the 2015 Canadian federal election, the Iranian community was divided, with those favouring re-engagement with Iran supporting Trudeau's Grits and those in favour of maintaining a hard line against Iran siding with Harper's Tories.¹⁸⁰

The Conservatives were not shaping their foreign policies in general and their policies towards Iran and Israel in particular simply based solely on domestic concerns, but they must remain a factor. Several commentators have noted that Canada has few vital interests in the Middle East and little influence, so it has a certain latitude to act based on domestic policy or on

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 43.

¹⁷⁶ D. Parvaz, "Who will pay as Canada cuts ties with Iran?" *Al Jazeera*, 10 September, 2012, US & Canada, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2012/09/20129814399526977.html>; Carment and Landry, "Diaspora and Canadian Foreign Policy," 213.

¹⁷⁷ Parvaz, "Who will pay as Canada cuts ties with Iran?"

¹⁷⁸ Laura Payton, "Canada closes embassy in Iran, expels Iranian diplomats," *CBC News*, September 7, 2012, Politics, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-closes-embassy-in-iran-expels-iranian-diplomats-1.1166509> (accessed July 29, 2019).

¹⁷⁹ Afshin-Jam's father had been tortured in Iran before the family emigrated. Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 43.

principle.¹⁸¹ Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal state that Tory foreign policy positions were principled, so long as they didn't alienate voters.¹⁸² This remark fails to acknowledge Harper's strong support of Israel would have alienated many in the Canadian Arab and Muslim communities, which was more than double the size of the Canadian Jewish community. Nonetheless, the Tories were not targeting the votes of many Canadian Muslim groups. If the Harper administration had significant domestic political interests in its Middle Eastern policies, they were calculated using a very precise algorithm at the riding level, weighing exactly how probable vote gains and losses would affect its seat allocation in the House of Commons. They would have to ensure that there would be a net gain galvanizing evangelical Christian support and bringing in more Jewish and Iranian Canadian votes in certain urban and suburban ridings versus how many potential Arab and non-Iranian Muslim Canadian votes were lost, along with the many other Canadians who favoured a more neutral position on Israel or a less forceful position against Iran.

Overall, sources are divided on whether the motivations of Harper's foreign policy in general, and specifically towards Iran and Israel were motivated by principle and ideology or pragmatic domestic political considerations. Thomas Juneau, James Devine, Mike Blanchfield, Jeffrey Simpson, Harper acquaintance Mike Srebrnik, CIJA CEO Shimon Fogel, and Rabbi Philip Scheim, who went with Harper to Israel, all claim Harper's policies towards Israel and Iran arose mostly out of his principles and beliefs, which are rooted in his desire to protect fellow democracies and see historical justice for the Jewish people.¹⁸³ John Ibbitson, Jordan Michael

¹⁸¹ Christian Emery, "Iran's nuclear deal will force Canada's hand; Harper's out of step with most in West," *Ottawa Citizen*, July 17, 2015, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/1697061599?accountid=14846>; Granatstein, *Whose War is it?* 168; Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 209.

¹⁸² Bloomfield and Nossal, "A Conservative Foreign Policy?" 155.

¹⁸³ Each source's assessment of Harper's beliefs was different, but in general it would be shared values and historical justice. Juneau, "A Story of Failed Re-Engagement," 43; Kestler-D'Amours, "Canada and Israel team up

Smith, Alan Bloomfield, Kim Richard Nossal and Christian Emery all claim Harper's Middle East Policies are a combination of both domestic considerations and Harper's beliefs.¹⁸⁴ Donald Barry, Steven Seligman, David Morin, Stéphane Roussel, and Peter Jones thought domestic electoral gains were the primary driver of the Harper government's foreign policy towards Israel and Iran.¹⁸⁵ Former Canadian diplomat Robert Fowler accused the Harper administration of "selling out [Canada's] widely admired and long-established reputation" in the Middle East to "lock up the Jewish vote."¹⁸⁶

It seems like a hefty overstatement to say that Harper and his Conservatives based their foreign policy towards Iran and its nuclear program mostly based on domestic political concerns. Nevertheless, electoral interests still played a significant role, otherwise there would be no difference between the rhetoric towards Iran in Parliament and in public addresses. It is clear that his government took electoral calculations into account when crafting policy, and fashioning strong policies against Iran's nuclear program and human rights violations had few electoral drawbacks. Conversely, the government's unabashedly pro-Israel policy, which motivated some of its Iran policies, certainly did carry with it an amount of electoral risk. Moreover, it is manifest that Harper had very strong pro-Israel, pro-Western and pro-democratic personal viewpoints which were very important in guiding his thoughts and policies towards the Middle East.

against Iran;" Blanchfield, *Swingback*, 155-157; Simpson, "How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada;" Csillag, "Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel's staunchest supporters?"

¹⁸⁴ Ibbitson, *The Big Break*, 15; Smith, "Reinventing Canada," 24; Bloomfield and Nossal, "A Conservative Foreign Policy?" 155; Emery, "Iran's nuclear deal will force Canada's hand."

¹⁸⁵ Barry, "Canada and the Middle East Today," 209; Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 88; Morin and Roussel, "Autopsie de la Politique Étrangère de Stephen Harper," 6; Kestler-D'Amours, "Canada and Israel team up against Iran."

¹⁸⁶ Ibbitson, *The Big Break*, 15.

Conclusion

Under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, there was a shift in Canada's rhetoric towards Iran and its nuclear program which first became evident during the Conservatives' second minority government and was clearly audible after it was elected to a majority government in 2011. The shift in tone directly affected policies, since the Harper government's public announcements about Iran constituted its policies.¹ The personal enmity that Harper, Baird and other members of the Conservative government had towards Iran reveal a significant policy change: before Harper, Canada's stance on nuclear weapons proliferation was based on principle and (usually) international consensus, whereas under Harper, this policy became ad-hoc, personal and circumstantial.² Harper and his foreign ministers responded to the expansion of Iran's nuclear program, and threats by Iran towards Israel by verbally lashing out against Iran and tightening sanctions against its nuclear program. This is remarkable because Harper said his foreign policies were based on principle. Yet, it's hard to see a principled position based on nuclear weapons non-proliferation when Harper's government signed a civilian nuclear deal with India and protected Israel from discussions about its nuclear program at the UN, even though both countries remained outside the NPT. Although in the case of India, the government was going along with the United States, the NSG and the IAEA's new policies. With Israel, Harper was operating on the principle of making sure Israel was not singled out or "pile[d] on."³ This suggests that standing by the Jewish state was more important to the Conservatives than nuclear weapons non-proliferation. When looking at India and Israel together, it might also show that the

¹ Global Affairs Canada, email, June 26, 2019.

² For example, Harper's lack of opposition to the non-signatories to the NPT's nuclear programs on one hand and then refusing to release pressure on Iran after the military aspects to its programs were in the process of being restrained through the P5+1 negotiations on the other.

³ Quoted in Seligman, "Canada's Israel Policy under Justin Trudeau," 87.

principle of protecting democratic states' interests was more important to the Harper government than enforcing non-proliferation.

It should be noted that Canada's historical nuclear weapons policies had occasionally veered from those of its NATO allies, most markedly when Howard Green was Secretary of State for External Affairs during John Diefenbaker's administration. The Green era and also Pierre Trudeau's leadership in promoting nuclear weapons non-proliferation and nuclear energy safeguards during the late 1960s through the 1970s and early 1980s show that Canada didn't always "go along to get along," but sometimes either went against its allies or took an international leadership role. At other times during the 1950s and 1960s the country went against international consensus to placate its allies. However, the Harper administration's refusal to change course rhetorically after the interim JPA of November 24th, 2013, and its statements that sanctions relaxation may be contingent not only on a report that Iran was being compliant with the IAEA but also a new government in Iran, show Canadian rhetoric and policies to be offside with both its close allies Britain and the United States, and international consensus, represented by the P5+1. This was something unprecedented in Canada's history of external nuclear policies. Perhaps the history of Canada's failed nuclear negotiations with India in the 1960s and 70s and Iran's long history of stalling tactics during nuclear negotiations may have contributed to the Harper administration's scepticism towards the JPA and then the JPCOA.

The motivations behind Stephen Harper's Conservative government's policies towards the Iran nuclear program are difficult to weigh exactly. However, there is evidence to suggest they were centered on Harper's strong convictions about the need to protect Israel specifically, and the Jewish people in general, from perceived genocidal threats from the Iranian government. These views wove in well with his black and white outlook of international affairs; it was clear

to him that Iran was evil and not to be trusted. As the principal director of Canadian foreign policy during the length of his administration, Harper's views were of paramount importance and caused the merging of rhetoric and policy.

Harper's beliefs regarding Israel had been developing since childhood. He had long viewed Israel both as a refuge for the Jewish people, who had suffered so much through history, and as an admirable bastion of liberal democracy in a region flush with dictators.⁴ Harper saw Israel as disproportionately targeted and maligned in international forums. Threats against the Jewish state by Iran caused Harper to take both a robust line and strong actions against the Islamic Republic and greatly fear its potential development of a nuclear bomb.⁵

There may be an aspect of religious antagonism to Harper's viewpoint, suggested by his references to Iran's leaders as "fanatics" and their ideology as "malevolent." These statements may have been attempts to communicate with, and energize the Conservative Party's base.⁶ Harper's views were supported by other senior members of his government such as John Baird, Jason Kenney and Stockwell Day, and cheered on by the Likud-led Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu (elected March 31st, 2009), as well as different lobby groups from segments of the Canadian Jewish and evangelical Christian communities.

The steady increase in alarmist and belligerent rhetoric about Iran and its nuclear program through the near-decade of the Harper administration was most apparent when Conservative MPs were speaking directly to the public during interviews, press releases and public speeches, as opposed to when they were speaking to Parliament. The inference is that these statements were more hyperbolic because they would reach more of the general public and

⁴ Chapnick, "Stephen Harper's Israel Policy," 107; Simpson, "How the political shift among Jewish voters plays in Canada;" Csillag, "Why is Stephen Harper one of Israel's staunchest supporters?"

⁵ Levitt, "Canada PM Sees Iran as 'Clear and Present Danger'."

⁶ de Kerckhove, *Canada and Iran*, 3; Regehr, "Tone down rhetoric on Iran nuclear question"; Levitt, "Canada PM Sees Iran as 'Clear and Present Danger'."

serve an electoral purpose. Interestingly, the government's rhetoric in Parliament on Iran's nuclear program, human rights abuses and threats against Israel, was, at least in the first few years of the Harper administration, often calmer and less alarmist than that of the opposition Liberal MPs. Moreover, some Grits proposed the government take more forceful action and pass stronger laws against Iran than it was willing to do in during its minority period. This shows that the Harper government was not alone in its rhetorical shift in Parliament and it had opposition backing for taking a hard line on policy towards Iran's nuclear program. It might also reveal a cynical attempt by the official opposition of trying to "out-hawk the hawks" by pointing out the Conservatives were not as aggressive as they seemed, or otherwise causing them to make a foolish policy misstep should they have buckled to Liberal pressure.

The Harper government's more hyperbolic tone would have served to drum up public support for the Tory's foreign policy and/or divert attention and votes away from the Liberals. The Conservative Party's domestic electoral strategy called for attracting votes from select ethnic communities throughout Canada. Both Jewish and Iranian Canadians were targeted by this scheme, and the government sought to demonstrate to both communities that it was upholding their interests. In addition, the Tories had to energize their base of evangelical Christians. With Jewish and evangelical voters, Canada's Iran policies were tied with Canada's energetic public defense of Israel, while with the general Canadian electorate, Iran was made out to be a threat based on its secretive nuclear program, terrible human rights record or general history of belligerent rhetoric and actions, such as supporting the Assad regime in Syria.⁷ Framing the threat of Iran only in terms of how it would impact Israel would not have elicited support from large swaths of the Canadian electorate, including the Iranian Canadian community. Overall, the

⁷ "Canada Closes Embassy in Iran, to Expel Iranian Diplomats."

government's bombastic rhetoric and focus on winning specified domestic constituencies demonstrates that Canadian foreign policy is partly determined by its domestic politics.

The Canadian government's positions on the Iranian nuclear program were also pushed along by international events leading to rounds of UN sanctions and increasing international pressure against Iran. Through the first half of government, Stephen Harper's Tories followed existing policies and positions towards Iran and its nuclear program, going along with a series of increasingly severe United Nations sanctions. Even after the last new UN sanctions against Iran were applied, Canada continued applying new sanctions, under the guise of matching its sanctions with its allies, especially the United States. After winning a majority government in 2011, Canada's policies towards Iran and its nuclear program became more aggressive and unilateral. The final set of Canadian sanctions, applied in May 2013, were not put in place to match the sanctions of Canada's allies, they were purely a Canadian creation. Following the election of President Rouhani in August 2013, negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran started bearing fruit; nevertheless, Canada doubled down on its commitment to sanctions and did not withdraw its initiatives to interfere with Iranian domestic politics. The Harper administration decided to wait for verifiable evidence that Iran's nuclear program was under full compliance with the nuclear deal before it would start to roll back sanctions, and even then there was the hint it might not do so until there was a new regime in Tehran. Since Canada was not a part of the negotiations, there was no need for Canada to make overtures to Iran, as it did not have to build trust with the Islamic Republic for the deal to succeed. However, Canada's scepticism indicated a lack of support for the deal and put Canada in a poor position to re-establish relations with an Iran that was now expecting to re-join the international community after years of sanctions and isolation.

In the end the Harper government's hostile policies and quarrelsome rhetoric against Iran and Iran's nuclear program did not help it win a third re-election, nor did it benefit Canada's relationship with its Western allies, who had spent years engaging in strenuous negotiations with Iran to get a hard-fought deal to restrict Iran's uranium enrichment and extensively monitor its nuclear sites. Only Israel openly maintained plaudits for Canada's "principled position."⁸ Most of the rest of the world appeared satisfied that the threat posed by the Iranian nuclear program had been curtailed.

⁸ According to Thomas Juneau, the Persian Gulf Arab governments were also supportive of Harper's stance on Iran. These governments did not release public statements on the matter. Juneau, "Iran After a Nuclear Deal: Where Will Canada Stand?"

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Appendix 1

Email from Global Affairs Canada to Jonathan Ballin, June 26th, 2019.

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for your enquiry concerning former Prime Minister Harper's policy on the Iran nuclear program.

While documents could not be found that describe a concise Canadian policy on the Iran nuclear program at that time, Canada's stance on Iran matters was often communicated through public statements.

Most of the statements made by Foreign Minister John Baird in 2012-2013 are archived on the Government of Canada's main website; these are accessible via the [archive search](#) on that page. For example, this [archived page](#) (also copied below) has a backgrounder that is quite comprehensive on the previous government's stance.

As well, the following links describe a timeline of Canadian sanctions against Iran and Canadian-Iran relations that may be useful.

- **Canadian sanctions against Iran:** <https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/iran/sanctions/index.aspx?lang=eng>
- **Canada-Iran Relations:** <https://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/iran/canada-iran/canada-iran.aspx?lang=eng>

Thanks again for your questions.

Regards,

Enquiries Service | Service des renseignements
Public Affairs Bureau | Direction générale des affaires
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Global Affairs Canada | Affaires mondiales Canada
Government of Canada | Gouvernement du Canada