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# Explaining the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal (2018) from the JCPOA-agreement

A Case Study of Small-State Balancing Between Opposing Allied Policy Positions

Master's thesis in Political Science

Supervisor: Gunnar Fermann

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Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences  
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## Abstract

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This thesis explores how small states like Norway balances between two major security- and trade partners, that are taking conflictual stands on the future of the multilateral arrangements such as the JCPOA. More precisely, it asks two questions: (i) What is the Norwegian position towards Iran, on the issue of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, after the US withdrawal from the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran? And (ii) Squeezed between the conflicting positions of the EU and the US, how can the (evolving) Norwegian policy position(s) be explained?

By utilizing the framework of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as a point of departure, a selection of foreign policy-relevant theories, located at the two levels of (i) global politics and (ii) domestic society, are deduced, and applied to argue X1-4 number of hypotheses. The hypotheses presupposes if the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by: (H1) the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States, (H2) the desire to optimize the balance between Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU, (H3) by the desire to confirm small state Norway's foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions, and (H4) by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business. The hypotheses are used as vantage points for the empirical mapping and testing of explanations as to why and how the Norwegian government reacted to the US withdrawal from the 2018 Nuclear deal.

The empirical analysis revealed in political statements and material action that the Norwegian government desired to keep the deal alive. Our explanatory findings confirms that a combination of inside-out and outside-in factors enabled and motivated the Norwegian policy reaction to the US withdrawal decision. A political culture of multilateralism in foreign policy and business interests, and a final finding that was not preconceived in any theoretical argued hypothesis, which relates to Norway's trade dependence on the EU and the related domestic export business interests. The study concludes that the Norwegian government's resolve to stick to her support of the JCPOA in the face of a US withdrawal from the agreement with Iran was likely strengthened by the Norwegian respect for international agreements and support for multilateral arrangements, and their economic- and commercial (trade) interests.

## Acknowledgments

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One day in late August, I read an article that covered the meeting between the Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, and the Norwegian ministers in Norway. In the meeting, the future of the JCPOA was discussed, and Mr. Zarif conveyed that Norway must not let the United States scare them into breaking international law on the issue of the JCPOA. The US withdrawal from the JCPOA 2018 left many concerned and led to a falling out between the US and the EU, who had conflicting attitudes on the nuclear deal's future. This sparked my curiosity, what role did Norway play in the nuclear agreement? And what is politically feasible for small state Norway in a situation where investments in the two relationships with the US and the EU cannot be maximized at the same time? These thoughts inspired me to write a master thesis that is grounded in this foreign political event.

This has been a long and educational process, which at times has been very demanding and challenging. I would therefore like to thank some people who have been with me through it all. First, I would like to give a big thank you to Gunnar Fermann, who has guided me with good and constructive advice through this project. Thanks to my friends who have lent an ear every time I needed someone to listen to my concerns. Thanks to my little siblings, who have been understanding, and made me laugh during stressful days. Last but not least, I would like to give a big thank you to my parents, Kamal Sharifi and Anbar Sharifi, who have been by my side throughout this whole process, and who have sacrificed a lot in their life so that they could give me this opportunity. Named or not, I'm grateful to you all.

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## Abbreviations

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E3	France, Germany, and Italy
E3/EU+3	China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with the High Representative of the European Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran
EEA	The European Economic Area agreement
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
FP	Foreign policy
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
Instex	Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges
Intsok	Norwegian oil and gas partners
IP	International politics
IR	International relations
JCPOA	The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NATO	The North-Atlantic security alliance
NCRI	the National Council of Resistance in Iran
NHO	The Norwegian confederation for enterprises
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
R&D	research and development
UN	United Nations

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# 1 Introduction: The nuclear deal with Iran

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On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, former President Donald Trump decided to withdraw the United States from the Iran nuclear deal, also known as *The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCPOA) and announced that the highest level of sanctions would be reimposed against Iran again. The US president described the deal as “Unacceptable, defective at its core and poorly negotiated”, and indicated it would be difficult to negotiate a new deal (US Whitehouse 2018).

The Iranian regime cannot be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a flawed agreement that proclaimed this goal but ultimately did not address the threats posed by the regime. If we do nothing, we know exactly what will happen. In just a short period of time, the world’s leading state sponsor of terror will be on the cusp of acquiring the world’s most dangerous weapons (US Whitehouse 2018).

The JCPOA was an agreement reached in Vienna, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 between the E3/EU+3; China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with the High Representative of the European Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran (JCPOA Report 2015, p. 2). This had been a long-running process of diplomatic efforts to reach a comprehensive, long-lasting, and peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue (EU Council 2015). The deal allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) access to the Iranian nuclear facilities, and in exchange, the UN and the US would lift the sanctions that were imposed on Iran. Former Norwegian minister of foreign affairs Børge Brende called the agreement on Iran’s nuclear program “historic”, but this historic moment fell quickly to pieces. (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015b).

President Trump’s decision triggered even more tension between the US and Iran, a relationship that had for many years been conflictual. The Iranian president Hassan Rouhani stated that the move made by the U.S and Donald Trump was “unacceptable”, but they were willing to negotiate with the remaining signatories of the deal (Aljazeera 2018). The announcement made by President Trump irrupted also a reaction from other states that participated in the agreement. French President Emmanuel Macron, a champion of the deal, wrote on Twitter “France, Germany and the UK regret the US decision to leave the JCPOA, the nuclear non-proliferation is at stake” (Aljazeera 2018). German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas stated “the deal makes the world safer”, while not finding legitimate reasons for pulling out of the deal (Aljazeera, 2018). UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson said he “deeply regret US decision to withdraw from the

Iran nuclear deal”, adding “UK remains strongly committed to the JCPOA, and will work with E3 partners and the other parties to the deal to maintain it” (Aljazeera 2018).

Furthermore, this also led to a falling out between the US and EU, who were requesting different options to a new policy. The US wished for the remaining states to also withdraw, while the EU wanted them to continue with the agreement without the US. The European Union diplomat, Federica Mogherini, called on the international community to preserve the Iran nuclear deal and stated: “The EU will remain committed to the continued full and effective implementation of all parts of the nuclear deal” (Aljazeera 2018; Lipin 2020; Melgård & Andreasen 2019).

For Norway, which has been connected to the Iran nuclear agreement through the IAEA, of which Norway is a board member, this was a rift between key allies and trade partners. The US being Norway’s most important security partner, and the EU is Norway’s most important partner within trade (through the EEA-agreement). Norway had played a vital part in the implementation of the agreement and had followed up on the Security Council’s resolutions on Iran’s nuclear program, as well as aligned themselves with the EU and lifted the sanctions that had restricted the Norwegian state from doing trade and cooperate with Iran (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015b, 2015a, 2016). This could cause pressure for the Norwegian foreign decision-makers to balance between their national interests and global expectations (Fermann 2018, p. 88).

### **1.1 Research question and (framework for analysis)**

During a summer visit to several EU countries in 2019 the Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif also met with the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Ine Eriksen Søreide in Norway. At the meeting, he was clear about not letting “the US scare the Norwegian government into breaking international law,” and wished to continue doing trade with Norway (Melgård & Andreasen 2019).

This statement sparked curiosity, due to Norway’s political power as a small state, having a slimmer security- and survival margin than the great powers, implies a narrower scope for how daring a state can and should be and thus makes it more crucial for small states like Norway to carefully evaluate their scope for political maneuvering in foreign affairs (Fermann 2010, 33). However, identifying what is politically feasible for the Norwegian government to do in a situation where investments in the two relationships with the US and the EU cannot be maximized at the same time, can be challenging. That begs the policymaking question, what

may the optimal balance between the two diverging concerns be? This problematique is a source of inspiration for the present single case study:

How are small states like Norway coping with the political cross-pressure likely to result from major security- and trade partners taking conflictual stands on the future of multilateral arrangements such as the JCPOA?

More precisely, the study will be guided by two related research questions:

- (i) What is the Norwegian position towards Iran, on the issue of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, after the US withdrawal from the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran?
- (ii) Squeezed between the conflicting positions of the EU and the US, how can the (evolving) Norwegian policy position(s) be explained?

The first research question is descriptive and the second is explanatory. The explanatory research ambition presupposes the prior establishment of facts on the (evolving) Norwegian policy position, in addition to empirically mapping some theoretically argued factors which might contribute to explain Norwegian behavior. The Norwegian policy position shall be mapped along with its expressive (political statements) and material dimensions as well as be juxtaposed with Norwegian policy positions *prior* to the US withdrawal from JCPOA.

In explaining why and how the Norwegian government adapted to conflicting policy positions among allies on an international agreement while protecting own national interests, I will make use of the eclectic framework of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) as a point of departure. FPA invites the researcher to apply relevant theories at two or more levels of analyses (e.g. international, domestic and bureaucratic politics) to explain foreign policymaking processes and outcomes (policies, implementation of policies) (Fermann 2013, pp. 89–139).

For this research it will be necessary to delimit the analytical units and illustrate how this study could be a part of a bigger research context. Studies within international politics and comparative politics often omit any small state actors from their research, because “they do not matter”, but they should matter since small states’ contribution and participation in world politics is more than negligible (Veenendaal & Corbett 2015).

The process of creating a nuclear deal with Iran started long before 2015, which was the year the JCPOA was signed, and until this day in 2021 the agreement is constantly being revised. For the sake of time and scope for this master thesis, the research will not be able to examine the whole process making of the agreement. The study will be more focused on the time periods between May 2018, which is the year the event happened, and until 2020. However, there will

be a section that gives a little historical context/background on the nuclear deal and all parties involved.

## **1.2 Previous research**

On the quest of finding previous research that had studied the same case, there were no articles or papers found that had applied foreign policy analysis to study the Norwegian reaction on the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018.

Earlier studies are mostly about the agreement itself, the relationship between the US and Iran on this issue and what goes behind the process making of such a deal. Farahmand (2016) investigated how the negotiations process with the underlying factors went on. He writes “after a decade of gridlock, Iran and the west ended with a successful agreement, but what factors determines when this type of deal is, or is not, agreed upon?” (2016, p. 4). The study examines previous unsuccessful proposals with the final nuclear deal through the lens of rational choice theory and analyzes causes and failures in these deals.

Papers with the US perspective as focus were common to find, Bergendal (2018) wrote in his master thesis about the Trump administration’s policy changes in the Middle East by comparing with those pursued by the Bush and Obama administration. He points out in his paper that until 1979, Iran was the US’ most important ally, and the Iranian government was part of Washington’s “twin-pillar strategy” which was supposed to keep the region stable. Iran’s new regime, which came after the revolution, was strongly against the Western imperialism and influence on the Middle East (2018, p. 11). Over the years, there has been a lot of tension between the US and Iran, and the US has planned several strategies that aimed at blocking the Iranian government from doing trade with other countries, such as imposing sanctions on Iran. The sanctions were excused on the assumption that Iran was developing more nuclear facilities, which goes against the policies of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Later through the Obama-administration the nuclear deal with Iran was signed, which was initiating the beginning of a reconciliation between the US and Iran. However, this has not been the case, when President Trump decided to withdraw from the JCPOA in 2018, the tension between the US and Iran increased. While, the JCPOA has become a positive opportunity between the European states and Iran (2018, p. 22).

In addition to the studies mentioned above, there are many more research that has been done on the Iranian nuclear deal, but none of them were specifically looking at how a small state like Norway would balance between global allies in a multilateral context like the JCPOA. A

common finding were studies that were inclined towards Norway's security policies with the US and NATO.

In an article, it was written about how small state behavior in security policy was often linked to 'prestige-seeking', and it was argued that small states like Norway would often deploy their own forces alongside the US and meet other military requests from major allies to enhance their standing and prestige in Washington. It was pointed out by the writers that increasing prestige could serve a small state's national interest. They used Denmark and Norway as cases to see if prestige-seeking was an important explanatory factor for the decisions to contribute to many US-led interventions after the end of the Cold War (Jakobsen et al., 2018)

These articles and theses' do not have any information that could be specifically relevant for this research, which looks to understand Norway's behavior towards the US withdrawal policy through the lens of foreign policy analysis. However, there were some factors mentioned by the writers that will be looked out for in the Norwegian political statements or material actions, such as if Norway's reaction could have something to do with prestige-seeking or national interests, or if there are any signs of global influences in their reaction.

### **1.3 The Methodological process: Research design and collecting the data**

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This section of the dissertation will address the methodological approaches, such as the research design and the method for data collection. These are necessary instruments for carrying out this study that is trying to explore: (i) What the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 is, and (ii) how this behavior, squeezed between two allies, can be explained.

#### **1.3.1 A single case study**

In a single case study, the research is concerned about the interaction between one specific context and a phenomenon. It is a form of intensive research design, that requires us to get close to and give a thorough description of the phenomenon that is studied, which in this case is the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal policy from the JCPOA in 2018. It is suggested to use case study if we want to go in the depth of a case, and find things we were not expecting, and based on this we can create hypotheses that later can be tested in other case-studies, or other types of studies (Jacobsen 2005, p. 92).

Case studies often provide less possibility for generalizing to other cases and units, but because these studies are based on a small number of study objects or cases it can form a more general

theory of what reality looks like, and how phenomena are connected. This is referred to as theoretical generalization, and are theories that have thrived from what we have observed, read and heard (Jacobsen 2005, pp. 96–97). Andersen (1997) describes it as having ‘one or a few cases that form the subject of an in-depth study that presents a comprehensive analysis that’s grounded in its roots’ (1997, pp. 8-9)<sup>1</sup>. This is also the ambition of this dissertation, to develop and discuss some hypotheses, which hopefully can contribute to develop new theory within this field.

### **1.3.2 Collecting the empirical data**

For a case study the preferred method for collecting information is through a qualitative approach, which are empirical data collected in the form of words, such as sentences or texts. Since our intention for this study is to develop and test some hypotheses that can perhaps contribute to new theories, it is necessary to use this approach so that we are able to explain and understand how Norway would behave in a situation squeezed between allies (Jacobsen 2005, pp. 131–132).

Qualitative studies can collect information in several ways, and in this particular case study, research on many various documents will be carried out. The documents will be a collection of primary- and secondary data, the former means we collect the data directly from the source, while secondary data entails that the information is collected by others (Jacobsen 2005, pp. 137, 163). The information collected will be public sources, that are published for a larger audience by either an individual, a group of people or organizations/institutions, such as: academic textbooks, news articles from online newspapers, and reports, white papers, and press releases from the different authorities (Jacobsen 2005, pp.181–182).

The process began with searching for previous studies that had done foreign policy analysis on the nuclear deal with Iran, especially from a small state’s point of view. These studies were found on the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) online University Library (Oria), which gives access to many printed and electronic articles and theses. Then it was necessary to find information that gave a historical explanation of the agreement: How it started, who participated in the multilateral negotiations, and since the focus of this study is Norway, the US, and the EU, it was especially important to look after sources that presented their points of view. These materials were found on various platforms, the JCPOA report was for instance found online on the European Council’s homepage ([consilium.europa.eu](http://consilium.europa.eu)) and it

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<sup>1</sup> Andersen in Jacobsen 2005, p. 90



contained all the points that needed to be followed by each of the participatory states. A lot of information on the agreement was also tracked online on the Norwegian government's website, as well as from various news platforms that cover the meetings between the representatives from each of these states, such as BBC, Al Jazeera, Dagbladet and VG (Norwegian News Papers). In order to be able to answer the research questions in this study, various statements from the different ministers or politicians are collected from various press releases published by the Norwegian government (regjeringen.no), the Whitehouse (whitehouse.gov), and the European Union (eeas.europa.eu). These are empirical evidence that are needed for both the empirical background and empirical analysis later.

### **1.4 Outline of case-study**

Going forward, this master thesis will move through several chapters that separately provide relevant information that will help to hopefully understand the studied phenomenon. **Chapter one** begins with combining two tasks: the first assignment is to present the case, the research question(s) and previous research. The second task will be responsible for the methodological approach of the thesis, which includes the research design and the process for collecting the data. **Chapter two** is responsible for taking the reader down memory lane by providing the history and content of the JCPOA. It will therefore look at data that addresses the time before and after the US withdrawal, but also after. The chapter will also present the various perspectives on the nuclear agreement with Iran, these are viewpoints from the units that are in focus for this study: The US, the EU and Norway. The Norwegian policy position will in this chapter focus on the period prior to the US departure from the deal. **Chapter three** will present the analytical model in foreign policy analysis (FPA) and the theoretical basis of the study, which includes theories from international politics and foreign policy. Then, some hypotheses that are grounded in the different analytical levels in FPA will be theoretically argued with help from the theoretical studies. **Chapter four** is combining two tasks: the empirical mapping of both the dependent and independent variables, and the analysis of the relevant data on Y and X. In addition, a **sub-chapter 4.5** will provide a final assessment of what factors and concerns, from the partial empirical analyses were the main drivers of the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. The dependent variable (Y) is for this study the Norwegian governments behavior after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, their statements, actions, and decision-making process. The independent variables (X<sub>n</sub>) relate to factors at different levels of analysis such as the global level in which I tackle concerns such as security dilemmas, economic interests, and the desire for multilateral cooperation, or from the

domestic level where interests from the Norwegian industry is looked at. **Chapter six** will do a recapitulation of the master thesis and provide a conclusion to my research question and hopefully provide our own contributions to this field of study.

## **2 The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): Historical context, content, and Norwegian support for the agreement**

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Before spelling out the theoretical arguments underpinning the hypotheses of the study, some historical context on the JCPOA is required. As is information on the agreement itself and the Norwegian attitude to the treaty. How did this process begin, who was involved, what was the purpose and instruments of the treaty, what was the initial Norwegian position, and why did the US decide to leave the deal?

The chapter is made up of three sections: The first, present the beginning that started with *The Additional Protocol*, which was an agreement signed before the JCPOA. The next section tells the story of the JCPOA, some key points of the content in the agreement are written down. This section also contains the reason behind the US's withdrawal. In the final section, I clarify the Norwegian position on the JCPOA before the US decided to walk away from the deal in 2018.

### **2.1 Nuclear agreement with Iran, The Additional Protocol (2013)**

Two years before the JCPOA was signed another agreement was reached in November 2013 between the E3/EU+3 and Iran.<sup>2</sup> The conditions were equal to the ones written in the JCPOA (2015) offering Iran relief from certain United Nations Security Council sanctions, US sanctions, and European Union sanctions, and in return, Iran pledged to conform in every way with the conditions in the agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran also agreed to allow the IAEA to visit some facilities that are not covered by its legal safeguards' agreements (Kelley 2014, p. 1).

Under the reign of the Persian Shah (king) in the 1970s an ambitious nuclear program was started, which was focusing on developing an aggressive nuclear power to protect Iran's stocks of oil for the future. In the beginning, the US supported the Iranian nuclear program and Germany agreed to build Iran's first nuclear power station. However, the Iranian revolution in 1979 changed these attitudes, especially between the US and Iran. Iran had taken the personnel of the US embassy as hostages, and this affected the hostility between these two states which has increased even more since then. Iran was strongly against Western imperialism and

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<sup>2</sup> In the article written by Robert Kelly (2014), he applies P5 +1 instead of E3/EU+3, but both refer to the same grouping: China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with the High Representative of the European Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. This study will continue to use E3/EU+3 to avoid confusion.

influence in the Middle East, and the US response to this was their “containment-policy” which meant that they would freeze Iran’s assets and hinder them from spreading their ideology, Khomeinism, to further parts of the Middle East (Bergendal 2018, p. 24; Kelley 2014, pp. 1–2).

In 2002 the National Council of Resistance in Iran, NCRI, publicly revealed the existence of two very large construction projects in Iran. One that resembled a large underground factory and had a significant hardening against aerial attack with earth-penetrating bombs. The second one was a pairing of a heavy water separation plant, which is the size of a small oil refinery, and an adjacent construction site with a heavy-water nuclear reactor. These were projects that had not been reported to the IAEA, which legal scholars on both sides of the question argued about if Iran should have done it (Kelley 2014, pp. 1–2).

In November 2011, the IAEA published a long list of indicators that stated Iran had engaged in nuclear weapon-related physics and engineering. The list suggested that Iran stopped actual nuclear weapon engineering development around 2004, which was consistent with an estimate made by the US intelligence soon after, implying Iran had interests in developing nuclear weapons but stopped in 2003. The reasons being many, but some assumptions were that Iran may have stopped after seeing the US attacks in Iraq based upon no evidence of a continuing Iraqi nuclear program, and shortly after the US and British ended Gadhafi’s nuclear program, which may also have been a reason for Iran to restrict its program to nuclear materials production. Even so, the IAEA failed to develop any weapon-related information back then in 2003 and for the next ten-year period that followed (Kelley 2014, pp. 2–3). This was despite the fact that in December 2003 Iran signed an Additional Protocol with the IAEA which allowed the IAEA more access to Iran’s nuclear facilities and it gave the IAEA more latitude to ask questions about activities that might have indicated nuclear materials production outside of Iran’s declarations to IAEA. Iran behaved accordingly to the Additional Protocol for two years even though the legislature did not ratify the agreement, meaning compliance was completely voluntary. Iran felt the IAEA did not keep its side of the bargain and in February 2006 Iran stopped its voluntary compliance (Kelley 2014, p. 3). However, Iran’s attitude changed a few years later.

In June 2013, former President Hassan Rouhani won the Iranian presidential election, and he was determined to end the 10-year long conflict between the involved states in the nuclear program. Mr. Rouhani is a member of the moderate party in Iran, and during his electoral

campaigns, he often criticized the previous presidents for being too offensive and uncompromising in their foreign policy. Unlike them, he planned a more moderate approach to the nuclear-related question which was emphasizing more on doing genuine negotiations (Heldal & Heireng 2015, pp. 7–9). President Hassan Rouhani wished to conduct two steps for removing the sanctions that had been imposed on Iran for many years:

- (i) Increasing the transparency in the nuclear program. He wanted an even clearer agreement that was within an acceptable international framework.
- (ii) Work for securing and increasing a more trustworthy relationship between Iran and other states.

(Heldal & Heireng 2015, p. 10)

From his perspective, the nuclear issue could only be resolved through mutual understanding and trust between E3/EU+3 and Iran including the IAEA, which would require all parties to lower their demands for Iran’s enrichment activities. Mr. Rouhani also hoped that the US would stop interfering in their internal affairs as well as acknowledging Iran’s right to nuclear development. He expressed that they were ready to lower the tension in Iran’s relations to other countries (Heldal & Heireng 2015, p. 10). “It is good for centrifuges to operate, but it is also important that the country operates as well, and the wheels of industry are turning” this was a statement made by Mr. Rouhani in an election campaign documentary on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June (BBC News 2013).

Later that year President Rouhani’s ambitious nuclear plan was achieved when Iran signed a deal with E3/EU+3. This was an agreement that would last for six months, and if Iran was able to keep to their side of the deal, then some of the international sanctions that were imposed on Iran, which amounted to a value of \$7 billion, would be reduced. The US foreign minister at that time, Mr. John Kerry clarified that this agreement did not mean the US acknowledged Iran’s right to enriching uranium. However, Iran’s foreign minister Mr. Javad Zarif thought the opposite of Mr. Kerry, the deal would acknowledge it (E24 2013).

Mr. Javad Zarif issued a joint statement together with EU High Representative Catherine Ashton saying the deal was an important step to ‘a final, comprehensive solution.’ This was days after intense negotiations in Geneva, where they declared that “the adoption of the joint plan of action was possible thanks to a sense of mutual respect and a determination to find a way forward which is beneficial for all of us”. They ended the statement by saying they looked

forward to swift implementation, which they would “jointly monitor, in close coordination with the IAEA” (Yan & Levs 2013).

The US President at the time Mr. Barack Obama said, “the deal was an important first step towards a comprehensive solution to Iran’s nuclear program,” the long-drawn-out diplomacy had “opened up a new path toward a world that is more secure, and the provisions of the deal cut off Iran's most likely paths to a bomb” he said (E24 2013; TheGuardian 2013). President Obama addressed that this would create time and space for more negotiations over the next six months and nothing would be agreed to unless everything was agreed on: “If Iran seizes this opportunity, the Iranian people will benefit from rejoining the international community, and we can begin to chip away at the mistrust between our two nations. This would provide Iran with a dignified path to forge a new beginning with the wider world based on mutual respect. If, on the other hand, Iran refuses, it will face growing pressure and isolation” (TheGuardian 2013).

The former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon also expressed hope that the deal would ease global concerns about Iran’s nuclear future, his office made a statement: “The Secretary-General calls on all members of the International community to support this process which, if allowed to succeed, is likely to be to the long-term benefit of all parties” (Yan & Levs 2013).

## **2.2 Nuclear agreement with Iran, The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015)**

The Additional Protocol that was signed in 2013 had been extended twice since then, and two years later in 2015, an improved version of the agreement was signed by the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany (E3/EU+3), and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This was *The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)*. There were still many concerns after the Additional Protocol that was signed in 2013, concerns regarding monitoring arrangements, the limits on the scope of Iran’s nuclear program, as well as everything related to enrichment activities and research and development (R&D). In the end, they managed to agree on a program that would ensure that Iran’s enrichment activities would only be used for peaceful purposes (JCPOA Report 2015, p. 2).

Under the new framework, Iran continues to accept restrictions on its nuclear program, which would last for a decade and some longer, and in addition, Iran was to submit to more frequent international inspections (JCPOA Report 2015, p. 4). The JCPOA allowed Iran the benefits of partaking in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and their nuclear program would be treated in the same manner as that of any other non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT (JCPOA Report 2015, p. 3).

As to the Additional Protocol (2013), Iran agreed to continue to roll back parts of its nuclear program in exchange for relief from sanctions, but if there were any violations, the sanctions would snap back into place (JCPOA Report 2015; Kelley 2014). International reductions in purchases of Iranian oil and increased isolation of the Middle Eastern country had squeezed its economy in recent years, and the lifting of those sanctions could bring the country major financial rewards. Other key points conveyed in the JCPOA were:

- i. Iran would have to reduce its total of about 19,000 **centrifuges** down to 6,104, allowing them to use only 5,060 centrifuges to enrich uranium over the next 10 years. Centrifuges are tube-shaped machines used to enrich uranium, which are the materials that are necessary for nuclear power and nuclear bombs.
- ii. Based on a 15-year plan Iran will carry out its **uranium enrichment** activities, and keep its level at up to 3.67%, which is enough for civil use to power parts of their country, but not enough to build a nuclear bomb. The 3.67% was a major decline and followed Iran's move to water down its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium. During the 15-year period, and as Iran gradually moves to meet international qualifications standards, Iran will reduce its stockpile of 10,000kg of low-enriched uranium to 300kg.
- iii. Iran can continue to conduct **enrichment R&D** in a manner that does not accumulate enriched uranium. Requirements to make changes at several of the Iranian facilities are made, including reducing centrifuges and rebuilding a heavy water reactor, and Iran will get to maintain its facilities.
- iv. A Joint Commission consisting of the E3/EU+3 and Iran was established to monitor the implementation of this agreement and to address issues that arise from the JCPOA. In addition, it was required of Iran to provide inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as well as access to all of their facilities so that the IAEA can ensure there is no potential for military developments. (Bradner 2015; JCPOA Report 2015, pp. 6–8)

March 2018, the IAEA reported that Iran was still abiding by the terms written in the JCPOA. The IAEA inspectors have spent 3,000 calendar days per year since 2013 on the ground in Iran, and they have installed about 2,000 tamper-proof seals on nuclear material and equipment. Since JCPOA Implementation Day the IAEA has carried out more than 60 complementary accesses and visited more than 190 buildings. They have collected and analyzed hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by sophisticated surveillance cameras in Iran, and in addition, it has

been collected over one million pieces of open-source information each month (Amano 2018). However, later in April that same year Israel's former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented revelations that insisted that Iran had violated the agreement. Israel claimed that they had gotten a hold of Iranian documents that proved that Iran had for many years had a secret nuclear program. These documents became known as Amad- archive (UNA Norway 2020).

Representatives from the Iranian government rejected the claims insisting that the “disclosures” were related to an old case that IAEA had already handled. Iran's foreign minister Mr. Javad Zarif, called Netanyahu's presentation “a childish stunt” and an attempt on trying to persuade Donald Trump to withdraw from the nuclear deal (UNA Norway 2020). Despite the continued efforts from both the IAEA and Iran in convincing Mr. Trump and the US to stay in the deal, in the end, they could not stop them from withdrawing from the deal. President Donald Trump had been clear since the day he decided to run for office that he would either remove or re-negotiate several deals including the nuclear deal with Iran (US Whitehouse 2018).

In May 2018, the Trump administration made the decision of withdrawing from the JCPOA and re-enforce their sanctions against Iran. President Trump stated that the deal was a horrible, one-sided deal that should have never been made, “it didn't bring calm, it didn't bring peace, and it never will” he implied. He continued by saying that the Iran nuclear deal was supposed to protect the United States and their allies from the lunacy of an Iranian nuclear bomb, a weapon that will only endanger the survival of the Iranian regime, allowing Iran to continue enriching uranium and, over time, reach the brink of a nuclear breakout. The deal lifted economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for very weak limits on the regime's nuclear activity, and no limits at all on its other behavior, including its sinister activities in Syria, Yemen, and other places around the world. From his perspective this deal was poorly negotiated: “when the United States had maximum leverage, this disastrous deal gave this regime many billions of dollars, some of it in actual cash, a great embarrassment to me as a citizen and to all citizens of the United States” (US Whitehouse 2018). The president of The United States continued with making remarks that were not in favor of Iran:

The deal's sunset provisions are totally unacceptable. If I allowed this deal to stand, there would soon be a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. The deal does nothing to constrain Iran's destabilizing activities, including its support for terrorism. Since the agreement, Iran's bloody ambitions have grown only more brazen like its dangerous



exports of missiles to terrorist proxies and militias such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban, and al Qaeda (Whitehouse 2018).

Mr. Trump also made it clear that in a few months the US would reinstate nuclear sanctions on the Iranian regime, and they would be the highest level of economic sanctions. In Addition, if any other nation would decide to help Iran in their quest for nuclear weapons, then they could also be strongly sanctioned by the United States. At the end of his speech he finished by saying that he would be willing to negotiate a new deal, one that would benefit everyone involved, and he hoped for great things for Iran and peace and stability within the whole Middle East (Whitehouse 2018).

### **2.3 Norwegian policy response to JCPOA (2015)**

Norway has been supportive of this deal since 2013 when the five member states of the UN security council including Germany had a meeting to negotiate an agreement regarding Iran's nuclear program. 'This is victory for diplomacy' - a statement made by the former Norwegian foreign minister at the time, Mr. Børge Brende. He mentioned that the use of diplomacy was an important method for this prolonged conflict: "it is an important first step and a historic breakthrough for the future of our world peace, Norway will play an important role in the work of this agreement" (E24 2013; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). Back then Norway was elected to the Board of Governors of the IAEA and was part of inspecting if Iran was upholding their obligations in the deal. The agreement provided increased access to and inspection of the facilities in Iran (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013).

In 2006 when sanctions were imposed on Iran for a third time by several countries because Iran had refused to halt its uranium enrichment program. Norway was one of the states that followed up on all the Security Council's resolutions and had aligned themselves with all the EU restrictive measures against Iran for several years (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015a). According to the portal *Lovdata.no*, which is a website that provides access to a collection of Norwegian legal resources online, it was forbidden for Norwegian legal entities and for any person residing on Norwegian territory to supply or transfer directly or indirectly to Iran:

- 1) *Objects, materials, equipment, supplies, and technology that may contribute to Iran's enrichment-related, reprocessing or heavy water-related activities or for the*

*development of a nuclear weapon's delivery system covered by an annex to the export control regulations.*

- 2) *The prohibition applies regardless of where the objects, materials, equipment, supplies, and technology originate from. It is also prohibited for a Norwegian-registered ship or aircraft to carry any of these objects, materials, equipment, supplies, and technology.*
- 3) *It's illegal for Norwegian entities and anyone who is staying on Norwegian territory to render technical assistance or training, financial assistance, investment, mediation, or other services from Iran, as well as the transfer of financial resources or services in connection with supplies, sales, transfers, production, is also prohibited.*
- 4) *Assets belonging to or directly or indirectly controlled by entities or subjects listed in Appendix 1, including subjects and entities listed by the Social Security Council or by the sanction committee, must be frozen (Lovdata 2007).*

These were only a few of the sanctions and measures that were set by the Norwegian law against Iran. However, on the Implementation Day for the agreement in 2016 this all changed when many of the sanctions were lifted by these countries, Norway too aligned themselves with the EU and lifted the measures that had restricted them from doing trade and cooperation with Iran, especially within the maritime sector, oil and gas, and banking and finances. The lifting of the sanctions would mean that there is no longer any need to apply to the Foreign Ministry for pre-assessment of all export to Iran. It would only be necessary for certain sensitive technology areas that prior authorization would be required (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018a). In a press release, the Norwegian foreign minister Mr. Børge Brende stated they were lifting most of their sanctions and restrictive measures against Iran, but at the same time he also pointed out that their relations with Iran would still be subject to some restrictions, including the measures that had been introduced because of the human rights situation in the country (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016).

In a press release in December 2015, Mr. Brende stated that Norway would help ensure that Iran's excess enriched uranium is replaced by natural uranium "so that the commitments in the agreement can be met". Norway provided 60.000kg of natural uranium (uranium concentrate) and its transportation from Kazakhstan to Iran, amounting to around 6 million USD (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015b). On the agreement itself, Mr. Brende stated:

The implementation of the agreement will be a victory for the international non-proliferation regime and for international diplomacy. Norway's support to the IAEA and

the agreement on Iran's nuclear program is an example of disarmament and non-proliferation work in practice. It also reflects the importance the Government attaches to concrete, effective action in this field. The implementation of the agreement will not only strengthen the global non-proliferation regime; it will also contribute to greater stability in the Middle East (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015b)

Norway's contribution to the implementation of the agreement is in line with the efforts taking place in the run-up to the Nuclear Security Summit, which was being held in Washington in spring 2016. Norway has provided extraordinary funding for the IAEA's monitoring since the implementation of the agreement in 2013. So far, this has amounted to NOK 14 million (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015b). In a press release, Mr. Brende stated that: "implementing this deal as effectively as possible is very important now, but that is Iran's responsibility. Verifying compliance with the agreement, particularly about its possible military dimensions is vital. The IAEA will play a crucial role here, and Norway will continue to support its important work" (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015a).

#### **2.4 In sum: The historical context of the JCPOA, and the various policy positions**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a historical mapping of the JCPOA and what the content in the agreement entails. Negotiations on a possible nuclear deal with Iran had been going on for many years, for the Western states and the UN it was an opportunity to get an overview of Iran's nuclear program, while for the Iranian government it was an opportunity to ease the sanctions that had been imposed on them as well as to take part in global trade. The JCPOA, that was signed in 2015, was important for the international security, but it could also inspire more agreements like this in the future. Norway has also been supportive of the deal, even though they have not signed the agreement, they have contributed with a lot from the sidelines, in diplomatic and economic terms. Despite these efforts, the former President Donald Trump made the decision in 2018 to pull the United States out of the agreement, stating that the deal was horrible because it allowed Iran, whom he considers a global danger, to develop nuclear weapons.

Before we go into the empirical mapping and analysis to what the Norwegian reaction might be to this action, we need to develop some empirical propositions that can be applied as possible reasons for why they might have reacted the way they did. The next chapter will provide studies from international politics and foreign policy, which will assist in developing hypotheses that can aid us in understanding this phenomenon.

### **3 Theoretical approach, arguments, and empirical propositions**

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This chapter provides the analytical framework for theorizing on how foreign policy-making decisions and behavior are brought about. Indeed, any Norwegian decision on the Iranian nuclear deal, prior to or after the US 2018 withdrawal, is a case of foreign policymaking and thus needs to be dealt with as such conceptually as well as theoretically. The primary end of the text is to theoretically argue (deduce) a small handful of empirical propositions (hypotheses) that can be used as vantage points for the empirical mapping and testing of explanations as to why and how the Norwegian government reacted to the US withdrawal from the 2018 Nuclear deal.

For this purpose, I first chose to conceptually clarify the phenomenon of foreign policy and foreign policymaking, and explain the analytical possibilities provided by the multi-level and process-tracing approach of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) (section 3.1). Subsequently, a selection of foreign policy-relevant theories, located at two different levels of analyses, are explicated, and applied to argue X1-4 number of hypotheses (section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 with subsections). Included in this section is the operationalization of the independent variables being part of the empirical propositions and guidance as to what sources may be useful in the subsequent mapping of the variables.

#### **3.1 Analytical levels in FPA**

Foreign policy is the state's externally directed public policies and is directed towards projecting the national interest in international politics. Pinched between the environments of society and the international state system, foreign policymaking is pinched between a rock and a hard place. FPA accounts for this fact by advising us to explain foreign policymaking- and implementing processes and outcomes by applying political theory and gather data from two or more levels of analysis (Fermann 2013, p. 90, 2018, p. 88).

It may distinguish between four or even more levels of analyses in this regard; A state's foreign policies may be explained in terms of attributes of (i) the global environment, (ii) the society in which the state is embedded, (iii) the institutionalization of government, and/or (iv) the personal attributes of key decision-makers. Levels (i) and (ii) are denoted outside-in and inside-out explanations respectively. Each level invites middle-ground theory that may be translated to explain some foreign policy-making phenomenon – whether it be the full range of decision-making and implementing processes, or the assessment of space of political maneuvering,

prioritization of foreign policy interests and goals, choice of foreign policy instruments, or the actual implementation of policy decisions (Fermann 2013, pp. 89–130).

In this study, I apply theories on two levels of analyses from which four hypotheses will be argued. Recall that the puzzle to be explained is the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018). To sustain the explanatory hypotheses, theories will be mobilized on the two levels of (i) global politics and (ii) domestic society (Fermann 2013, pp. 110–16). That is to say, how may some mix of outside-in and inside-out factors and considerations induce Norwegian foreign policymakers to arrive at the Norwegian policy position?

### **3.1.1 Theorizing at the level of global politics**

Especially for a small state like Norway considerations about the global environment is likely to weigh heavy in foreign policymaking. The international system makes it challenging for small states to stand on their own, especially if countries struggle economically or lack a credible military deterrence (Hobbes in Fermann 2013; Gilpin 1984; Waltz 1979).<sup>3</sup> Norway is one of the richest countries in the world, but as a small state she is still dependent on a security alliance such as the US and NATO, and a free trading market that opens up for states to import or export products and services they do not have access to themselves (Nyhamar, 2011, pp. 151-153). It is therefore understandable why the EU and Norway were put under so much pressure when the US decided to withdraw from the nuclear agreement with Iran. Even though the Norwegian government was not a signatory to the deal, Norway has been contributing from the sidelines, both politically and economically.

The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from JCPOA is thus likely to have been influenced by Norwegian considerations about the global political ramifications. In this section, I will theoretically argue three hypotheses on the level of global politics that may have influenced Norwegian post-US withdrawal JCPOA policies. For that purpose, I make use of political realism emphasizing security interests and economic concerns and extract arguments from liberalism and liberal institutionalism to make sense of Norwegian investments in multilateral institutions.

#### **3.1.1.1 Realism, alliance politics, and the security dilemma**

It is stated in the thought of realism that the international system is more equal to an anarchic system since there is no higher, overarching authority, this system puts states in a battle of “all

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<sup>3</sup> Waltz (1979) retrieved from Fermann (2013)

against all”. Classical realists, such as Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, argue that the global environment is full of uncertainty and insecurity leading to interaction characterized by a struggle for power and survival, and the distribution of power is, therefore, the main concern in global politics (Hobbes in Fermann 2013, p. 25; Østerud in Hovi & Malnes 2011, p. 89).

The pressure from the anarchic (unregulated) structure is according to structural realist Kenneth Waltz constraining states’ scope for political maneuvering - small states’ more than big states’, everything else being equal. The latter moderator points to structural realism’s key and sole variable in international politics, the observation that there is an uneven distribution of power between states. In this specific sense, the international state system is hierarchical. In such a system it is difficult, if not impossible, for small states to stand alone and protect their territories and interests against bigger states. Their strategic choice is to bandwagon, obey or perish on their own (Waltz 1979, p. 97).<sup>4</sup> In the case of Norway, consecutive Norwegian governments have since 1949 been part of and invested in the security organization of NATO to safeguard Norwegian political independence, territory, population, and valued ways of life (Fermann 2013, p. 34).

The North-Atlantic security alliance (NATO) that is composed of the US and European states, like Norway, is built on the principle of collective defense, which means that an attack against one ally is considered as an attack against all allies. This principle is considered as the very heart of NATO and is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (NATO 2019). NATO has taken collective defense measures several times, and the Norwegian government has also taken part in several missions. However, participating in interventions is not something states are forced to do, for example, the Norwegian government has on some occasions exercised their right of reservation, which has caused tensions in relations with the US (Fermann 2013, pp. 36–37).

How committed a state should be to an alliance, is a dilemma and a balancing act, as explained by Glenn H. Snyder in terms of “the security dilemma in alliance politics” (1984). Snyder describes security alliances such as NATO as a form of insurance where member states pay a price to secure themselves from external threats such as extortion, losing their rights, access to strategic resources and territory, and lastly losing their self-dependence. There are often **two fears** that states have in alliances: One is the *fear of abandonment*, which means that states have a fear of being excluded from security benefits if they do not pay the required price that is

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<sup>4</sup> Waltz (1997) retrieved from (Fermann 2013; Jackson og Sørensen 2016)

demanding by the alliance. The other fear that states have is a *fear of entrapment*, which means that states are afraid they might be dragged into military interventions that might not benefit them (Snyder in Fermann 2019, p. 8). Tore Nyhamar (2011, p. 151) argues that Norway is a half-hearted internationalist, which means that they are a country that wishes to be included and take part in global politics, but at the same time they also want to reserve themselves from too deep international cooperation. For instance, Norway is a member of NATO but reserved herself from having permanent allied bases on Norwegian territory in peacetime to not provoke neighboring Russia.

The Norwegian government may be concerned that if she does not side with the US government's new withdrawal policy on JCPOA, the US may conceive of this as a serious Norwegian failure to support the USA as Norway's main NATO ally. This may have serious consequences for Norway further down the road when Norway is in dire straits and need American security support or confirmation. Or phrased in Snyder's terminology: The fear of being abandoned by the US might be greater than any other consideration. On this backdrop, the first hypothesis is thus formulated:

**H1 – Security-first hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States (X1).*

What does it take to find this hypothesis to be supported by empirical evidence? I would expect to find that the Norwegian government's policy positions and statements are very sensitive towards - and even aligned with - the US withdrawal policy. I will also need to document more thoroughly the Norwegian dependence upon the US security umbrella.

### **3.1.1.2 An extended conception of security including economical concerns**

States do not only seek territorial security and political autonomy but also want economical security. This has been discussed by Robert Gilpin, who describes himself as a liberal in a realist world. While some 'classical realists' such as Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger often excluded economic interests as main drivers of foreign policies and often focused more on national security/defense, other realist scholars brought issues such as trade, money, and foreign investments into the paradigm, especially since the 1970s (Gilpin 1984, pp. 289 & 293).

According to Gilpin political hegemony and economic efficiency are necessary ingredients for a nation to promote and dominate a liberal world economy. He emphasizes the importance of

international economic institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, and that they should be given greater emphasis in the study of international politics. Other realists acknowledge the fact that the state's economic foundation and vulnerability do not only affect state's ability to defend its territorial sovereignty and political independence, but it also influences the distribution of power between states (Gilpin 1984, p. 295; Mearsheimer in Fermann 2013, pp. 62–63).

Fridrich List argues that economic security was important because a state's power was based on its production, organizing its economy would contribute to developing the nation and strengthening the state (Henderson in Holsti 1995, p. 100)<sup>5</sup>. Norway signed the agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) to get access to the EU market, which aims at enabling free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital including the freedom to choose a residence in any country within this area. This is more than any economic cooperation; it is economic integration accounting for a lion-share of Norway's imports and exports (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). For the governmental decision-makers in Norway preserving their territorial security would be one of their top priorities, but their economic interests would also be important.

Recall that the US and the EU signatories to the JCPOA have conflicting positions on the issue of withdrawal from the treaty. Therefore, Norway must be careful when trying to balance between the two partners. On one side Norway is dependent on their security guarantor, which is the US, staying in an alliance with the US and NATO secures them from security threats from neighboring states. On the other side, Norway might also be concerned about its trade and political connection to the EU. Promoting Norwegian industry and export will strengthen their financial basis for protecting their territorial security and political independence (Henderson in Holsti 1995, p. 100)<sup>6</sup>. This is placing Norway in a cross-pressuring situation, and the Norwegian government has no desire of choosing between the two. On this backdrop, the second hypothesis is thus formulated:

**H2 – Cross-pressure hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to optimize the balance between Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU (X2).*

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<sup>5</sup> (Mearsheimer(2001) & Gilpin(1987) in Fermann 2013, pp. 66–67)

<sup>6</sup>(Mearsheimer(2001) & Gilpin(1987) in Fermann 2013, pp. 66–67)



Again, what does it take to find this particular hypothesis to be supported by empirical evidence? I would expect to find that the Norwegian government's *public* policy positions and statements are few in numbers and low-key and ambiguous in the formulation. As to the independent variable (X2), I will need to document more thoroughly also the importance of the EU relationship for Norway.

### **3.1.1.3 Theorizing multilateralism**

Classical realist's pessimistic view on international politics is understandable since many of them like Thomas Hobbes lived during a time when society and the world were affected by civil wars. The world is not like that today in 2020, even though warfare has not been completely wiped out, there still is a lot more engagement for cooperation and diplomatic solutions. Like it is stated in realism there is a hierarchical system with an uneven distribution of power between states that are supposedly legally equal, the big states are often running a proactive foreign policy while small states are more focused on adapting their policies towards the global environment. This makes it only natural for small states to always promote and support international law and cooperation since international law contributes to maintaining a system where states are equivalent to each other, with equal rights, and differences such as power and strength are brushed to the side (Nyhamar in Hovi & Malnes 2011, pp. 151–152).

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, standard diplomacy was done in a closed space between two parties (bilateral negotiations), but this changed in the aftermath of the Second World War when multilateralism suddenly emerged as a supplement for bilateral relations and are institutionalized in the UN and several other world organizations. The idea of creating international institutions and organizations comes from the core values of liberalism, that unlike realism has a more optimistic view on the world and state interaction. From the liberal perspective, states can create mutual rules, expectations, and institutions to promote behavior that does not destroy the possibilities for mutual gain. This creates a collective security between states, and neoliberals argue that this is an effective way of resolving conflicts. Norway is a state that often seeks multilateral negotiations because this way they will not stand alone, especially if there is an opportunity to work with big states. The idea of creating organizations and institutions together with states from the whole world was a suggestion made by Immanuel Kant, together the states would unite and punish any state that committed aggression, safeguarding the collective interests of all the nations while protecting the self-determination of small nations that all too easily became pawns in great power games (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2010, pp. 86–87).

A system with common rules binds big states more than small states since they are more likely to influence a possible outcome. For Norway this becomes a lucky strike since this fall in line with Norwegian interests and their ideal motives, which is why the UN and other multilateral structures – international treaties included - plays such a significant role in Norwegian foreign policy. Indeed, for multilateralist-inclined Norway, the dictum *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements should be respected) is a strong diplomatic reflex (Hovi 1991, pp. 21–44).

When the first discussions about a possible nuclear deal between Iran and E3/EU+3 was taking place, Norway was quick on board and have since been actively taking part in the negotiations. This is a familiar path in Norwegian diplomacy and mediation, which has been active in many similar cases like this. The use of mediation and diplomatic instruments are sometimes the only ways for small states to affect the balance of power between states, like the Norwegian authorities who in some cases do not have any other recourses/methods that can solve the outfall of international crisis (Nyhamar in Hovi & Malnes 2011, 153–154). Being a committee member of the IAEA gives the Norwegian government certain commitments that cannot be ignored because that would put Norway in a bad light. For Norway maintaining an image that respects both international law and human rights is important and taking part in IAEA's work in the nuclear deal with Iran can be beneficial for Norway as a small state. This path could lead the way for more multilateral deals in the future, and that's despite the political values of each state. On this backdrop, the third hypothesis is thus formulated:

**H3 – World order hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to confirm small state Norway's foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions (X3).*

Furthermore, what does it take to find this particular hypothesis to be supported by empirical evidence? I would expect to find that the Norwegian government's public policy positions and statements to be argued on the principle that international agreements should be upheld even if not perfect. As to the independent variable (X3), I will need to document Norway's principled and favorable views on multilateralism and multilateral institutions' contribution to preserve peaceful world order.

### **3.1.2 Theorizing at the level of domestic politics**

It cannot be ruled out that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from JCPOA can be causally traced back to domestic circumstances and factors. Having argued three outside-in empirical propositions (hypotheses), I will finally take an inside-out look at domestic sources

of foreign policymaking. Such sources include society's social, political, and economic fabric – structures and actors – that may influence foreign policies (Fermann 2013, pp. 111–112). More specifically, I will apply Andrew Moravcsik's liberal approach to international politics, where he argues that domestic factors have a fundamental impact on state behavior in world politics (Moravcsik 1997).

### **3.1.2.1 Liberalism and Andrew Moravcsik**

The fundamental premises in liberal IR-theory are the relationship between states and the domestic and transnational society, in which internal influences such as social preferences and criticism are shaping the state. Andrew Moravcsik, who is a liberal thinker, worked on creating a liberal alternative to Waltz's structural realism theory. In his article, he presents three theoretical assumptions that give liberal perspectives to how the relationship between the state and society could explain how states behave in world politics (Moravcsik 1997, p. 515).

The first assumption is contemplating that resourceful individuals and interest groups are the key players in state-society policymaking, which also includes foreign policymaking. The second assumption concerns the feature of society, and the state being an institution that works to represent its domestic interests in global politics. The third assumption is focusing on the international arena in which each state is chasing after its national interests. Just as the Norwegian state then is assumed to be driven by its domestic interests, other states are also influenced by their domestic politics and interest. Adding to this Moravcsik argues that that the foreign policy of the state somehow reflects society's ideational, commercial, and constitutional make-up (Moravcsik 1997, pp. 516–520).

*Ideational liberalism* explains a state's behavior based on how their social identities and values are shaped within their society. *Commercial liberalism* is focused on how participation in economic transactions in the national and international arena can achieve either gain or loss in a state's domestic politics, and different actors can put pressure on the government to either open or restrain access to these markets. *Republican liberalism* focuses on the nature of domestic representation, and how the demands for social identities and economic interests can be united and represented in societies through political institutions.

Moravcsik argued that such structures and interest groups were influencing the external public policies of the state, within the constraints given by the global environment. In particular, he believes that commercial interest groups and actors attempt to influence a state's foreign policies to support their transboundary interests (Moravcsik 1997, pp. 524–530).

An international system with laws and norms is not the only interest small states seek after, as pointed out in commercial liberalism, they also have visions of an open world economy. An open-world market contributes to economical security which is probably more desirable for small states than big states, because the domestic market doesn't have the capacity to keep the big and efficient companies alive, also because the production domestically aren't able to provide entire ranges of products that the population is requesting (Nyhamar in Hovi & Malnes 2011, p. 151). Taking part in a free trade system and having access to a global market will contribute to more opportunities for interactions between states, and an increase in their welfare benefits and wealth. (Fermann 2013, pp. 65 & 70).

The withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 may lead to many consequences for the Western businesses in Iran, which also include some Norwegian businesses. On this backdrop, the final hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H4 – Interest group hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business (X4).*

Finally, what does it take to find this particular hypothesis to be supported by empirical evidence? I would expect to find that the Norwegian government's public policy positions and statements are centered around commercial and liberal arguments related to the benefits of free trade. As to the independent variable (X4), I will need to document Norway's business interests with and in Iran, including trade and foreign investments.

### **3.2 In sum: The theoretical context**

Chapter three describes foreign policy and foreign policy analysis, which analyzes the room for maneuver of a state based on four levels. This study focused on two analytical levels: the global environment and the domestic political influences in Norwegian society. At the two levels, a total of four hypotheses were theorized with help from studies in international politics and foreign policy. A summary will be given in the table below.

These hypotheses will in the next chapter be placed in the same order and mapped along with its expressive (political statements) and material dimensions, to see which of the four can be empirically supported by the presented data.

Analytical level	Theoretical approach	Hypotheses	Focus of empirical mapping
The level of global politics	Realism, structural realism & the security dilemma	H1: The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States (X1).	Norway's security dependence upon the US
	Liberal realism, economic concerns	H2: The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to optimize the balance between Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU (X2).	Norway's dependence on the EU (EEA-agreement), the pressure between the US and the EU
	Liberalism, multilateralism	H3: The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to confirm small state Norway's foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions (X3).	Norway's view on multilateralism and multilateral institutions.
The level of domestic politics	Liberalism, commercial liberalism	H4: The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business (X4).	The Norwegian industry, commercial groups

**Table 1: The deductive “bridge” between the theoretical and the empirical universe**

## 4 Analyzing the empirical evidence

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Chapter 2 provides information on the Norwegian government's policy position prior to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, while Chapter 3 theoretically reasons four empirical propositions which will assist in analyzing Norway's behavior in 2018 (dependent variable Y). Moreover, this will illustrate how this behavior in the aftermath of the US withdrawal may be explained (hypotheses H1-H4). Finally, in this chapter, it is possible to present relevant data on dependent variable (X1-X4) and discuss what the empirical material implies for the validity of the four explanations deduced. Due to format limitations, we choose to merge the descriptive task of presenting the relevant facts on the independent variables and analyzing what relevant facts on Y and X might imply for assessing each one of the four hypotheses in terms of support and refutation.

We move forward through four sections. Each of the four hypotheses will be confronted with data on the relevant independent variable (some X) to assess whether and how our theoretical expectations find any empirical support. In a fifth section, the Norwegian policy position to the US departure in 2018 will be revealed and a synthesis of the four partial empirical analyses is developed to offer a final assessment of what factors and concerns were the main drivers of the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA.

### 4.1 The primacy of security? Mapping Norwegian security concerns and assessing H1

What empirical evidence can we find in support of the hypothesis that the "Norwegian reaction to the JCPOA (Y) was primarily motivated by the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States (X1)"? In order to conclude that this hypothesis has some merit, we need to document that the US is crucial for the Norwegian security interests, and to find empirical indications, that the Norwegian government's positions and statements concerning the US withdrawal from the JCPOA reflect this Norwegian security dependence upon the US.

We first consider the dependence of Norway on US security guarantees. Norway's geographical position, considerable resources, and small-state status make her vulnerable to outside threats and exposes her to power pressures more than many other European countries. For example, potential disputes could happen between the US and Russia on Norwegian territory because of

continued great-power rivalry and positioning in the North-East Atlantic, the Arctic, and the Barents Sea. For Norway, it is thus crucial to aim for a security policy that secures its neighboring areas and Northern zone and prevents a war from happening in this part of the world. To do so, Norway is reliant on security alliances with powerful states that can support Norway in their security relations, such as NATO and the close security connection with the United States, which has become cornerstones in the Norwegian security policy (Børresen 2021; Bingen in Marthinsen & Ørnhoi 2008, p. 44).

Norway and the US started their relations in 1905 when Norway obtained its independence. The US was one of the states that supported Norway and offered the Norwegian government a helping hand. Years later, in 1949, their bilateral cooperation was expanded as Norway and the US became one of the founding members of the transatlantic alliance, NATO. These security connections and Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack on one member state is an attack on all member states, have been a great source of protection for Norway if the security of the state is ever threatened. However, taking part in NATO requires some sacrifices such as acquiring new frigates, purchasing multi-role fighter jets, or lending Norwegian territory for the training of the armed forces of NATO, also in 2019 and 2020, the Norwegian state budget proposed NOK 13 million to be spent on matters related to global security. While Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide stated that the distribution of these financial resources “serve the Norwegian interests” in the broader sense, she added that this effort also is an investment in NATO and our collective security (Norwegian Ministry of Defence 2014; Prop. 1 S 2018, p. 77; Prop. 1 S 2019, p. 63).

Recall from chapter 3, sub-section 3.1.1.1, that for the empirical proposition H1 to have some merit, it would be because the Norwegian government’s policy positions and statements are susceptible to - and even aligned with - the US withdrawal policy. The US regularly takes the lead in Western alliance politics and plays an irreplaceable role in NATO's military structure. Hence, it is politically demanding for Norway to go openly against the policies of the US. From the classical realists Machiavelli and Hobbes, who were mentioned in 3.1.1.1, it was said that the global environment was full of interactions that were led by a struggle for power and survival. According to Waltz, it is a system where there is an uneven distribution of power, and the unregulated anarchic system is constraining the small states. In the international system where there is a hierarchy with strong states like the US on top, it is difficult for small states to

stand alone and protect themselves (Waltz in Fermann 2013, p. 106).<sup>7</sup> If the Norwegian government were to criticize the US on the withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018), the US might perceive the Norwegian reaction as a blatant failure to support its most crucial security partner.

We argued that Norway's fear of being abandoned by the US (Snyder 1984) would push any Norwegian government towards aligning itself with the US because as Norway's international neighborhood is constantly changing and more uncertainty is formed, being outside of the NATO alliance could lead to many security threats against the Norwegian state. Norway's security dependence on the US is thus indisputable, and so is the inclination of any Norwegian government to avoid confrontation and strategic disagreement with the US – including a new US administration's policy towards Iran.

Next, we need to consider if there is empirical evidence that Norway met these theoretical expectations in actual behavior, either in action/inaction or in statements/silence? After President Trump's decision, many of the remaining states and their representatives, including the Norwegian foreign minister Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide, released statements expressing how the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and reimposing new nuclear sanctions was regrettable:

The Iran Nuclear Deal has helped to promote regional stability and has contributed to our security. It has been effective in achieving its objective, to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c).

The JCPOA was, for many, an attempt to start better relations between the states and institutions involved and deal with the fears and uncertainty they had about each other. Ms. Søreide was concerned that this decision could increase the instability in what was already a volatile region. Also, the Norwegian government was concerned that the US decision could affect the future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the international community's ability to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The unexpected turn of events was threatening international security, which later could have also affected Norway's security (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c).

What was more unexpected was the continuation of the Norwegian statement that did not follow the assumptions that Norway would not be so forward with its actions and thoughts. Rather despite the US' request for the remaining states to also withdraw the Norwegian position on the JCPOA was clear:

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<sup>7</sup> Waltz 1959 & 1979



President Trump's decision does not mean that the deal cannot be salvaged. We urge Iran in the strongest terms to keep the deal alive, and we welcome the signals that Iran is willing to do so (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c).

According to the Norwegian foreign minister, the nuclear deal helped promote regional stability and contributed to Norwegian security, and it was a valuable effort to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

These empirical findings are not in line with the theoretical argument that the Norwegian government would refrain from demonstrating disagreement with its most important ally, the United States, and as theoretically argued in terms of fear of abandonment and formulated in empirical proposition H1. Instead of being vague and silent in its response to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, the Norwegian government made it clear, though without “shouting,” that Norway would like to see the continued implementation of the nuclear deal. On this backdrop, the security-first hypothesis (H1) does not seem to have much empirical support (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018a). However, the final assessment of this we reserve for sub-chapter 4.5, where all empirical evidence and hypotheses are considered in conjunction.

## **4.2 Cross-pressure - between a rock and a hard place? Mapping Norwegian security and economic concerns and assessing H2**

What empirical evidence can we find in support of the hypothesis that the *“Norwegian reaction to the JCPOA was primarily motivated by the desire to optimize the balance between Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU.”* To conclude that this hypothesis has some merit, we need to document the importance of the EU relationship for Norway and find empirical indications that Norwegian positions and statements are reflected by the Norwegian desire to protect both their security and economic interests.

In the previous sub-section 4.1, we looked at if Norway’s security interests and dependence on the US could give an explanation to the Norwegian position on the JCPOA after the US withdrawal in 2018. We learned that Norway’s security relations with the US and NATO are regarded very high, and it is not desired to get on bad terms with the US. In addition, the US withdrawal from the JCPOA is also testing Norway’s relationship with the EU, which can be considered equally as important as their security relationship with the US, and that is why this cross-pressure hypothesis was created. Wondering if there was a possibility that the Norwegian

reaction could have been caused by a power-political pressure between Norway's two most critical multilateral relationships: one being their security guarantee and one being their most important trading partner. Since the security-related data has already been documented in 4.1, going forward in 4.2, the focus will first be to also present information that can verify Norway's relationship with the EU, and then look at statements or behavior that can confirm if Norway was put in an uncomfortable position pressured by her two main allies.

From sub-chapter 3.1.1.2 (chapter 3), we learned that Norway signed the EEA agreement that gave them an economic and political connection to the EU and the European market, which means Norway gets economic benefits in return for adjusting the principles and laws from the EU to the Norwegian legislation. For Norway that is an opportunity to export their natural resources such as oil, gas, and fish, which are Norway's biggest sources of income. In return, Norway is also able to import products and services from EU states that the Norwegian state is not capable of producing themselves. To give a summary, the Norwegian import from the EU is more than 60 % while the Norwegian export amounts to 80 %, making the EU Norway's largest trading partner. Through the EEA agreement, the Norwegian government imports cars from Germany, medicine from the Netherlands, wine from France, and wood from Sweden. (Meld. St. 5 2012, p. 21; Rolsdorph & Austnes 2007).

Politically, as mentioned, the purpose of the EEA agreement is to link the EEA and EFTA countries to the EU's internal market through a common set of rules for free movement of goods and free movement of people, services, and capital, as well as common competition rules. When the agreement was signed in 1992, it contained 1875 legal acts, and the deal is known to be dynamic, which means it constantly updates its regulations on the parts that concern the agreement, and as of 2012, the total of legal acts amounted to 4445, (Meld. St. 5 2012, p. 16).

Gradually, issues such as internal security, terrorism, fundamental human rights, and relations with third countries have also become an essential part of EU justice policy. Taking part in these committees and EU bodies are often "mandatory" for member states, just like the JCPOA, that came together through much effort from the EU and their representatives (Meld. St. 5 2012, p. 26). Recall from chapter 2, when it was announced that the US was withdrawing from the JCPOA, the EU was worried that this could also lead to the deal's remaining participants leaving, especially Iran. The EU released a statement saying they regretted President Trump's decision, but they hoped that as long as Iran would continue to commit to the nuclear deal, the

EU would also remain committed to the deal, which could be a dilemma difficult to solve (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018b).

Looking at the empirical proposition H2 presented in 3.1.1.2, it was argued that for this hypothesis to have any value it would be because the Norwegian government's policies and statements on the US withdrawal from the JCPOA would be vague and few in numbers. After all, Norway's cooperation with both the EU and the US would make it difficult for the Norwegian foreign decision-makers to side with either one. This is a situation that should not be taken lightly because these are disagreements between Norway's two important allies.

The US alliance is important for the security interests and policies of Norway, which was presented in 4.1, and the dependency on the US is not only crucial through bilateral negotiations but is also important through NATO, where the US often takes the leading role in global security issues. If we follow the viewpoints of the school and scholars of realism that was written in 3.1.1.1, in international politics where there exists an uneven distribution of power making it difficult for small states especially, alliances with the US and NATO are needed if Norway wants to survive amongst other powerful states. That is why, like it was mentioned in 4.1, for Norway to express that they cannot stand next to the US on the JCPOA would be difficult.

On the other hand, the economic and political affairs with the EU through the EEA-agreement are also important for the Norwegian industry. The EEA-agreement opens the door to the European market, which we know is Norway's biggest partner within trade. Although, security policies are important to protect the Norwegian territory, resources, and population, like Robert Gilpin argued in 3.1.1.2 Norwegian governmental officials cannot ignore the importance of the economic interests of a state as well. Today, a state's financial standing could also contribute to its position in the international system. Another important matter to why it might be difficult for Norway to go against the EU is because legally they are locked to the EEA-agreements which often require that Norway has to take part in political affairs even though they might not desire it.

Remember Snyder's fear of being abandoned in 4.1, in contrast, this time it is probably more a feeling of being entrapped between two alliances that offer two equally important interests for a small state. The Norwegian foreign decision-makers might therefore fear to state anything or take any action that could be used against them in any of their cooperation's. This cross-pressuring situation is placing Norway between a rock and a hard place.

To consider if there is empirical evidence that Norway met these theoretical expectations in actual behavior, either in action/inaction or in statements/silence? The Norwegian reaction to the EU's statement was very supportive, and the Norwegian decision-makers also urged Iran in the strongest terms to keep the deal alive. In the statement released by the Norwegian government after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, the Norwegian foreign minister, Ms. Ine Eriksen Sørreide, said:

We support the EU's unambiguous statements indicating its commitment to ensuring the continued implementation of the Iran nuclear deal (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c).

In addition to this statement, later in 2019, Norway became a shareholder of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (Instex). Instex was a payment channel established by Germany, France, and Britain, and the objective was to continue trading with Iran and circumvent the US sanctions. The goal was to secure trade in medicines and food and to prevent an economic crisis in Iran. In a statement released by the Norwegian government it was said:

In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (Instex) subject to completion of national procedures (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a).

From what we can see in these statements made by the Norwegian decision-makers, there is no vagueness in their reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. Despite finding the US withdrawal regrettable, the Norwegian government is clearly showing their support for the EU not only in a rhetorical way but also in action by taking part in the payment channel, Instex. This means that these empirical findings are not in line with the theoretical argument that the Norwegian government would take a few steps back and not show favor to any of the sides, and there were no signs from the Norwegian side that showed any form of being pressured into choosing a side like it is stated in the empirical proposition H2. Therefore, it does not seem like the cross-pressure hypothesis (H2) has any empirical support (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018a). Still, like mentioned above the final assessment of this will be thoroughly given in sub-chapter 4.5, where each empirical evidence and hypothesis will be considered in a combination.

### **4.3 Multilateral desire? Mapping multilateralism in Norwegian foreign policies assessing H3**

What empirical evidence can we find in support of the hypothesis that the “*Norwegian reaction to the JCPOA was motivated by the desire to confirm small state Norway’s foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions.*” To conclude that this hypothesis has some merit, we need to verify that the Norwegian view on multilateralism and multilateral institutions desires to preserve a peaceful world. Also, to find empirical indications that the Norwegian government’s positions and statements regarding the US withdrawal from the JCPOA support the belief that international agreements should be upheld, even if not perfect.

In sub-chapters 4.1 and 4.2, my presented data portrayed the importance of security alliances and trade for a small state like Norway and how global factors such as security- and economic desires could explain Norway’s actions and statements regarding the US leaving the nuclear deal. Further in this section, the data will present one more global factor that might help us understand Norway’s behavior in this case: Norway’s relations to the multilateral system, which allows small states like Norway to compete with the big states without using methods such as military threats.

From a Norwegian standpoint, it is believed that the multilateral system is crucial for both the world and for Norway. However, this system is currently under much pressure as certain influential countries have placed less importance on multilateral cooperation and instead decided to solve their problems bilaterally, or in some cases, unilaterally. This could make it more challenging for a small state like Norway to protect its interests since the relations between states would become more fragmented, and it would benefit the states that have more power and capacity to impose their viewpoints. That is why Norway has for many years now been dependent on developing a rule-based international system between states with institutions like the UN, NATO, and the EU, because having a mutual set of rules contributes to maintaining a system where states are equivalent to each other, with equal rights, and differences such as power and strength are brushed to the side. These rules have been necessary for combating international threats and challenges and rules that ensured open markets and free flow of capital (Hovi & Malnes 2011, pp. 151–152; Meld. St. 27 2019).

The Norwegian objective for the JCPOA was another attempt to find solutions for the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Having a seat on the IAEA Board of Governors makes it possible for Norway to participate in investigations related to Iran's nuclear program. It has been an essential element in Norway's international efforts in non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. However, despite the IAEA's diligent work with reports stating Iran had been following principles of the deal, there was still conflict – according to President Trump “a horrible one-sided deal that should have never been made” (Landler 2018; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019b).

In the empirical proposition H3 (3.1.1.3) it is stated that for this hypothesis to have any merit, it would be because Norway's actions and statements favored the principle that international agreements should be upheld and to encourage states to continue to take part in these multilateral cooperation's. Norway has always been active in taking part in diplomatic negotiations that promote peace and stability in the world, which is why there is a possibility that Norway will show support to the UN, especially the IAEA where Norway is a member of the board. Norway's position in the IAEA could have some influence on the decision-making related to the JCPOA-agreement. For the Norwegian foreign decision-makers, it could be important to keep promoting diplomatic solutions like the JCPOA and to support international institutions and organizations like the IAEA that are trying to advocate for an international order that protects states like Norway from global challenges such as nuclear weapons.

From the liberal perspective that was mentioned in 3.1.1.3, it was discussed that with multilateral negotiations like the JCPOA states can create mutual rules, expectations, and institutions to promote behavior that does not destroy the possibilities for mutual gain. For Norway, it could be an opportunity to work with states on global issues, despite their political preferences. This creates collective security between states, which according to some neoliberals is an effective way of resolving conflicts. If this hypothesis is valid, then that means that Norway's statements are focused on mutual gain, mutual security, the idea that breaking international law is not something we should be supporting, we should come together for the collective security of all.

To verify these theoretical expectations, we need to find empirical evidence, in either statements or behavior. In the statement released after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 the Norwegian foreign minister, Ms. Ine Eriksen Sørreide, expressed that she was concerned the withdrawal would bring an increase of instability in what is already a volatile region. The

decision could affect the future of the NPT and the international community's ability to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons:

Our position on the nuclear agreement with Iran is clear: The Iran Nuclear Deal has helped to promote regional stability and has contributed to our security. It has been effective in achieving its objective – to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. We have full confidence in the International Atomic Energy Agency's verification and monitoring work and their assessment that Iran is fulfilling its obligations (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c).

It was also stated in a report to the Norwegian parliament (white paper), that Norway's priorities over the next few years would be to defend her room for maneuvering in foreign policy:

To be a driver for reforms that make the institutions more effective and representative, and to cooperate more on issues of common interest with countries that differ from us, strengthen the Norwegian public administration's work on multilateral issues, and ensure sufficient resources and relevant expertise for multilateral efforts (Meld. St. 27 2019).

From what we can see, it seems our empirical findings are in line with the theoretical argument and the empirical proposition H3, that Norway would support international agreements, even though it is not perfect, and her desire for supporting multilateral institutions to help promote international stability. Norway, who sometimes might be silent or shy away from expressing what they desire in situations like these, aligned themselves with the IAEA and had full confidence that they had done their job accordingly to what was wanted. On this note, *the world order hypothesis (H3)* can be confirmed to have empirical support. In sub-chapter 4.5, we will go more into detail on this.

#### **4.4 Norwegian business interests? Mapping Norwegian investment and trade with Iran and assessing H4**

What empirical evidence can we find in support of the hypothesis that the "*Norwegian reaction to the JCPOA was motivated by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business.*" To conclude that this hypothesis has some merit, we need to document Norway's business interests with and in Iran, including trade and foreign investments. Also, we need to find empirical indications that the Norwegian government's positions and statements concerning the US withdrawal from the JCPOA are centered around commercial and liberal arguments related to the benefits of free trade.

So far in this chapter, the independent variables (X1-3) were looking at factors from a global level, such as security dilemmas small states like Norway might encounter, economic interests they might desire, and the multilateral system's meaning for Norway. In this last section 4.4, the focus is shifting from the global influences to influences from the domestic society in Norway. This last *interest group- hypothesis* based on Moravcsik's *commercial liberalism*, looks at the interest groups and actors within the state that try to influence Norway's foreign policy positions towards the JCPOA.

In 2015, when there were talks about a possible deal between the US and Iran, in which some sanctions against the Iranian government would be lifted, many international businesses were getting ready to invest in Iran, like the Norwegian businesses. For Norway, this was an opening to enter one of the world's largest oil- and gas reservoirs. In an interview with Sjur E. Bratland, a representative from Intsok, it was said that "Iran was a country with many resources and demands and is an interesting market." Intsok is an establishment between the Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian oil- and gas industry (1997) that is in charge of marketing the Norwegian petroleum industry internationally, "the Norwegian industry has many answers to what Iran needs," he commented (Lie & Svanemyr 2015).

The petroleum industry was not the only field in that Norway was interested in investing in Iran. Many of the Norwegian maritime companies were also eager to enter this market. In 2016, 60 participants from different industries and companies accompanied Per Sandberg, the former Norwegian minister for fish, to Tehran. The participants were workers from the seafood- and suppliers' industry and some from maritime businesses. Mr. Sandberg stated that "authorities in Iran were interested in Norwegian fish and especially in our technology solutions within the aquaculture industry," he believed the Iranian government could give ample opportunities for exporting both seafood and technology: "it is not every day that you encounter a market with 80 million people, this is a unique opportunity" he says (Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries 2016).

The bilateral trade between Norway and Iran went effectively after the sanctions were eased in January 2016, in connection with the implementation of the nuclear agreement (JCPOA). The Norwegian export to Iran was doubled in 2017 compared to 2015, but after the US's reintroduction of sanctions against Iran in 2018, many foreign companies were put in a demanding situation (Norwegian Embassy in Tehran, undated). The Norwegian government was met with a crisis that could affect Norwegian interests.



The US reimposing its sanctions led to many consequences for the western businesses in Iran, including some Norwegian businesses like Jotun, a chemical company dealing with paints and coatings. They were selling many of their products through their distributors in Iran and had already established an un-developed company there, Jotun had planned to start up their company in Iran fully, but they were dependent on regular flow of cash in and out of Iran to do so. Another Norwegian company, Purapipe, an engineering and construction company that offers pipelines, operation, and maintenance contracts to governments, had won a contract for about 300 million euros to lay water pipes in Iran. Purapipe had their minds set on the oil industry in Iran, but when there was a downfall in the oil prices, they changed their minds (Sagmoen 2018).

The Norwegian confederation for enterprises, NHO, was disappointed by the US decision, stating that “the Norwegian government was missing out on many good opportunities.” The Norwegian companies were unwilling to risk ending up in a conflictual situation with the US, who had declared that they would give sanctions against companies that established new trade contracts with Iran (Wig 2018a). This led to the NHO asking the Norwegian government for help and believed that the authorities had to help the Norwegian companies (Aftenposten 2018).

To give a reminder, in the empirical proposition H4, it was suspected that for this hypothesis to have some merit, the Norwegian government’s public policy positions and statements needed to be centered around the interests of the commercial groups and actors in Norway. In contrary to H1-3 which was concerned about the pressures from the global actors, in H4 the pressure might be from the domestic actors. There is a possibility Norway would like to expand their relations within the trade with Iran, on resources such as petroleum or fish. Since Norway has much-advanced technology and equipment within these fields it could have many benefits for both Norway and Iran. Another possibility for Norway’s reaction to the US withdrawal would be the pressure from the Norwegian industry, businesses, and enterprises such as NHO, who want to trade and do transactions with the Iranian industry. Like it was mentioned above, some Norwegian businesses like Jotun and Purapipe were ready to invest in Iran and open their businesses but were held back because of the US sanctions.

From the perspective of commercial liberalism, which was mentioned in 3.1.2.1, it was pointed out that the different actors within the state could be pressuring the government’s foreign policy to either open or restrain access to the international market. Moravcsik argued that commercial interest groups and actors attempt to influence a state’s foreign policies to support their

transboundary interests (Moravcsik 1997, pp. 524–530). The Norwegian foreign decision-makers could feel a sense of responsibility and would maybe want to support their people who contribute to the Norwegian government through these transactions. The Norwegian government might have felt burdened by not protecting the Norwegian businesses.

To prove these theoretical expectations, we need to find empirical evidence that shows Norway's statements or actions being sensitive towards the Norwegian commercial industry. Days before the US withdrawal, the former Norwegian minister of trade and industry, Mr. Torbjørn Isaksen released a statement in response to the NHO and the Norwegian companies:

I will follow the developments in this matter with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is still too soon to say anything specific about how this might affect the Norwegian industry (Wig 2018a).

While Mr. Isaksen was unsure about how the situation would unfold, he also added that he did not wish to give any direct advice or guidance on the issue:

I will not discourage or stand in the way of the Norwegian businesses, but I urge you to take the US's new sanctions seriously. The Norwegian companies must evaluate the consequences of the US sanctions themselves (Wig 2018b).

These were political statements that were provide prior to the US withdrawal policy in May 2018, and despite these requests from the NHO, the Norwegian foreign minister Ine Eriksen Søreide did not provide any detail on the consequences this would have on the Norwegian industry in her statement. However, in 2019, it was revealed that Norway would take part in Instex – a payment channel created between European states with the purpose/intention to avoid US sanctions while continuing trade with Iran (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a).

This situation is slightly different from the other X1-3 because the Norwegian Ministry of foreign affairs did not say much about the relationships between the Norwegian and Iranian industries in their statement that was released after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. Apart from Mr. Isaksen's statement, there is no other statement related to this case from other political figures in Norway. What is different from the empirical findings in the other hypotheses, is that Norway was more expressive through the material actions, by joining Instex. Instex like mentioned above, allows the Norwegian businesses to continue their trade with Iran, while avoiding the US sanctions. This means our expectation is through Norway's material action on par with my empirical evidence, which stated that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal was centered around commercial and liberal thoughts, such as free trade. I, therefore, believe my *interest group- hypothesis* can be confirmed.

#### **4.5 Connecting the dots. What do the statements, actions, and selective silence of the Norwegian authorities say about Norwegian priorities in dealing with the fallout in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018?**

Having presented and discussed relevant information concerning the four hypotheses in separation, it remains first to shortly answer research question one. Then the relative importance of the four explanatory candidates' will be analyzed and utilized to explore research question two. More specifically, what do the statements, actions, and selective silence of the Norwegian authorities say about Norwegian *priorities* in dealing with the fallout in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018? What explanation, or combination of explanations, is better at accounting for the Norwegian foreign policy behavior in the situation that occurred when the Western agreement fell apart over the future of JCPOA? Did the primacy of security prevail over economic concerns? If not, were the ties towards the EU more important for the Norwegian government than the economic ties to Iran, if not complementary? Did the multilateral reflex in Norwegian foreign policy contribute to strengthening other factors? If so, how?

We begin with the first research question that asked:

- (i) What is the Norwegian position towards Iran, on the issue of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, after the US withdrawal from the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran?

Based on the four partial analyzes in 4.1 to 4.4, it was conveyed in political statements and material action that the Norwegian government desired to keep the deal alive. This policy position is similar to Norway's policy position in 2015, when the JCPOA was signed. Going forward, the final assessment will explore which factors and concerns were the main drivers of the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA.

Recall the formulation of the second research question:

- (ii) Squeezed between the conflicting positions of the EU and the US, how can the (evolving) Norwegian policy position(s) be explained?

To explain this question, the Norwegian reaction was mapped along with its expressive (political statements) and material (actions) dimensions, to empirically test whether and to what extent the theoretically argued propositions (hypotheses) could find any support in evidence.

The empirical findings in sections 4.1 and 4.2 revealed that neither in political statements, actions or selective silence could the security-first hypothesis (H1) or the cross-pressure hypothesis (H2) be empirically supported. While the results from sections 4.3 and 4.4 show that the world order hypothesis (H3) and interest-group hypothesis (H4) can in statements, material dimensions, and selective silence be empirically supported.

The security-first hypothesis (H1) was created on the assumption that it would be politically demanding for Norway to go against the US, whom the Norwegian government is dependent on in their security policies. The result showed the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA 2018 (Y) was not motivated by the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States (X1).

The cross-pressure hypothesis (H2) had the intention of investigating if the US and the EU's conflicting positions on the issue of withdrawal from the treaty in 2018 would make Norway behave in a way that balances between the two partners. Despite these concerns, the empirical evidence presented in 4.2 shows the Norwegian state being very forward with its desires by supporting the EU's unambiguous statements indicating its commitment to ensuring the continued implementation of the Iran nuclear deal (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018d).

Norway did not only show support through their political statement in 2018, but later in 2019, they became expressive in their material dimensions by becoming a shareholder of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (Instex), a payment channel that would allow the Norwegian state to continue doing trade with Iran while being able to avoid the US sanctions (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a). This would imply that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was not motivated by the desire to optimize the balance between Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU (X2).

The world-order hypothesis (H3) was investigating if the Norwegian political statements or actions towards the US withdrawal policy in 2018 were going to continue promoting this international agreement, despite the political values of each state. The Norwegian foreign

statements from 2018, which are presented in 4.3, showed concern for the increased instability this decision from the Trump administration would bring and how it would affect the future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Norway's position was therefore clear, the JCPOA that had helped promote stability and contributed to everyone's safety should continue to be upheld. Norway also had full confidence in the IAEA's verification and monitoring work (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018c). This proves that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to confirm small state Norway's foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions (X3).

Finally, the interest-groups hypothesis (H4) was claiming that the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal could be centered around commercial and liberal arguments related to the benefits of free trade. The interesting finding in sub-chapter 4.4 was that rhetorically through Norway's political statements they stayed silent. The only statements we got related to the Norwegian businesses and commercial groups, was days before the withdrawal (2018), when the former Norwegian minister of trade and industry, Mr. Torbjørn Isaksen, had replied to NHO and the Norwegian industry saying that the Norwegian government would not stand in the way of these businesses if they desired to continue their business relationship with Iran, but they needed to consider the consequences themselves (Wig 2018b).

However, this time the Norwegian material actions spoke louder than words, because in early 2019, Norway became shareholders of Instex, which was created for the European businesses who desired to continue with their negotiations with Iran but was held back by the US sanctions (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a). This reveals that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business (X4).

The empirical analysis of the four hypotheses (H1-4) reveals that Norway's behavior in reaction to the US withdrawal from JCPOA was due to a political culture of multilateralism in foreign policy, and economic and business interests. The table below provides an overview of the results from the partial analyzes.

Analytical level	Hypotheses	Empirical analysis (result)
Level of global politics	H1: Security-first hypothesis	Disproved, no empirical support
	H2: Cross-pressure hypothesis	Disproved, no empirical support, refuted
	H3: World order hypothesis	Confirmed, empirical support
Level of domestic politics	H3: interest group- hypothesis	Confirmed, empirical support

**Table 2: The results from the empirical analysis of the four hypotheses**

Through the expressive and material dimensions presented (sub-chapters 4.1 - 4.4) these empirical findings provide a combination of explanations. First and foremost, we did not find that the Norwegian reaction could be traced back to security interests and dependency on the US (H1). Clearly, the Norwegian relationship with Iran is seen through a different lens than Norwegian relations to Russia. In terms of distance and geographical position, Iran is far away from Norway, and might therefore not be considered as much of a security threat as Russia would be.

Norway supporting the international agreement was explained in terms of their concerns for what this could mean for the future of the NPT, which is a global security threat for all states, big and small (H3). Although the JCPOA might not be perfect, it promotes behavior that does not destroy the possibility of mutual gain without using methods such as military force, which would put Norway at a disadvantage (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2010, 86–87). For Norway, it is crucial that international agreements are respected (*pacta sunt servanda*), because a rule-based international system with institutions like the UN, NATO, and the EU hinders the big and powerful states from going on a rampage and solve their problems bilaterally, or in some cases, unilaterally.

Simultaneously, one could argue that Norway would also shy away from taking part in international events if there were no benefits for her. Recall from the white paper presented in section 4.3, it was stated that Norway’s priorities over the next few years were to be “a driver for reforms that make the institutions more effective and representative, and to cooperate more on issues of common interest with countries that differ from us.” Norway’s multilateral policies on the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) could therefore have contributed to strengthening other factors, such as economic- and trade interests.

This would then explain why Norway did not feel the pressure of balancing between their security interests and economic interests (H2), on the contrary, it gave an explanation that had not been theoretically argued for this research, which was the Norwegian dependency on the EU. For Norway, standing by the EU's resolution would either mean that they are prioritizing their economic interests and trade opportunities with the EU, or the expectations Norway has towards the EU through the EEA-agreement entraps her from saying or doing anything else.

Recall from section 4.2, when it was explained that as the EU has gradually become more interested in issues such as internal security and fundamental human rights, it has therefore in some cases become mandatory for Norway, who is associated through the EEA-agreement, to take part in these committees and EU bodies. Even though Norway has not signed the nuclear deal with Iran herself, it looks like she is committed through the EU, which we can detect from Norway's political statements and material actions over the years. Before the US withdrawal policy in 2018, Norway had always been following the EU's lead on the nuclear deal. For instance, in chapter two, it was stated that when the sanctions against Iran were lifted in 2016, Norway also followed the EU and adjusted their laws related to the trading policies with Iran.

Moreover, we should not leave out that Norway's reaction towards her Western allies' disagreement on the JCPOA (2018) could also have been motivated by their economic and trade desires with the EU and Iran. This was conveyed through their material actions when joining the payment channel, Instex, with other European states in early 2019. Instex allowed the Norwegian industry to continue its trade with Iran while avoiding the US sanctions (H4). This reaction and Norway's expressive support towards the EU (H2), tells us that Norway prioritized their economic- and commercial (trade) interests in their foreign policy decision-making, and combined they account for a better explanation to Norway's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018.

Finally, we draw attention to the probability that the Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from JCPOA had more than one source of motivation and was enabled by both inside-out and outside-in factors. This pattern indicate support for the general dictum that the motivation behind foreign policies usually is found in the plural – in main and supporting causal factors and mechanisms. Our findings, also seem to lend support to the notion that Norwegian foreign policies is better understood in terms of an ideational tradition of “national liberalism” (Knutsen et al., 2016), and that Norwegian self-interest thus tend to be expressed in a language borrowed from the vocabulary of political idealism (Toje 2010, pp. 207–17).

## 5 Conclusion - recapitulation and contributions

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This foreign policy analysis has reached its final chapter, which has two purposes: First, to provide a summary of the study (Chapters 1 through 4). Second, to pinpoint the main contributions of our research.

The objective for this single case-design study was to investigate how small states like Norway balance between two major security- and trade partners, who are taking conflictual stands on the future of the multilateral arrangements such as the JCPOA. To shed light on this topic, the study began posing two related questions - the first one is descriptive and the second explanatory:

- (i) What is the Norwegian position towards Iran, on the issue of The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, after the US withdrawal from the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran?
- (ii) Squeezed between the conflicting positions of the EU and the US, how can the (evolving) Norwegian policy position(s) be explained?

Before going into the theoretical chapter, some historical context on the JCPOA was provided in chapter 2. The chapter gives information on the agreement itself, how the negotiations began, what roles the US, EU, and Iran played in it, and why did the US decide to leave the deal. The Norwegian policy position before the US withdrawal from JCPOA in 2018 was also mapped out along its expressive (political statements) and material (behavioral actions) dimensions.

In chapter 3, the analytical framework for theorizing on how foreign policy-making decisions and behavior is brought about, was provided. Firstly, the phenomenon of foreign policy and foreign policymaking was clarified, and an explanation of the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) framework was given. Borrowing arguments from several analytical levels of political theorizing, we deduced the following empirical propositions in terms of explaining the Norwegian government's policies in the face of the US 2018 withdrawal from JCPOA:

**H1 – Security-first hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to prioritize own security interests and the relationship to the United States (X1).*

**H2 – Cross-pressure hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to optimize the balance between*



*Norwegian security- and economic interests as embodied in the relationships with the United States and the EU (X2).*

**H3 – World order hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to confirm small state Norway's foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions (X3).*

**H4 – Interest group hypothesis:** *The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA (2018) (Y) was motivated by the desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business (X4).*

Hypotheses H1-3 are outside-in explanations originating at the global politics level of analysis. Hypothesis H4, on the other hand, is formulated as an inside-out explanation located at the domestic (societal) level of analysis.

The task of Chapter 4 was two-fold: the empirical mapping of both the dependent (Y) and independent variables (X), and discussion of what the empirical material implies for the validity of the four explanations deduced. The dependent variable (Y) for this study was the Norwegian expressive and material reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, and the independent variables (X1-4) represent each of the theoretically argued hypotheses. The chapter moved through four sections (4.1 – 4.4), where each of the hypotheses was confronted with relevant empirical data (political statements, material actions, and selective silence), that were used to validate whether and how our theoretical expectations find any empirical support. In the fifth section (4.5), a synthesis of the four partial empirical analyses was developed to offer a final assessment of what factors and concerns were the main drivers of the Norwegian government's reaction to the US withdrawal from the JCPOA.

Juxtaposed with the Norwegian policy position before the US withdrawal from JCPOA in 2018 and mapped along with its expressive (political statements) and material dimensions, the empirical findings revealed that the answer to the first research questions, Norwegian policy position in 2018 (Y) is as follows: The Norwegian reaction to the US withdrawal from the agreement was virtually to confirm her previous position on the agreement. The Norwegian government confirmed that the Iran Nuclear Deal help promote regional stability and facilitate the prevention of Iran developing nuclear weapons. Indeed, the Norwegian government urged Iran to keep the deal alive, and welcomed the signals that Iran was willing to do so (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018c).

As to the second (explanatory) research question, the empirical analysis indicates that the lack of any overt Norwegian political support for the US withdrawal from the JCPOA was due to three factors of which two are covered in our initial repertoire of empirical propositions:

- **One global ‘outside-in’ factor, H3:** The desire to confirm small state Norway’s foreign policy investments in multilateral cooperation and multilateral institutions (X3)
- **One domestic ‘inside-out’ factor, H4:** The desire to safeguard the commercial interests of Norwegian business (X4).

Recall that foreign policymaking is going on between a rock and a hard place, implying that decisionmakers need to consider both external and domestic ramifications – whether dealing with prospects for loss or for gain. Our explanatory findings confirms that a combination of inside-out and outside-in factors enabled and motivated the Norwegian policy reaction to the US withdrawal decision. A final finding amplifies this conclusion. This finding was not preconceived in any theoretical argued empirical proposition on our part but became visible during the effort to map related matters. This relates to Norway’s trade dependence on the EU and the related domestic export business interests. This could be argued as a fifth empirical proposition/ explanation finding considerable empirical support.

Interestingly, this explanation is a merger of outside-in and inside-out because dependence on the EU markets reflects in Norwegian business interests. This explanation also shows that economic interests in relation to Iran and the EU were considered much more relevant for the hammering out of the Norwegian response to the US withdrawal than security interests. That principled respect for international agreements and support for multilateral arrangements were deemed to point in the same direction as prospects for economic gains and loss, are likely to have strengthened the Norwegian government’s resolve to stick to her support of the JCPOA in the face of a US withdrawal from the agreement with Iran.

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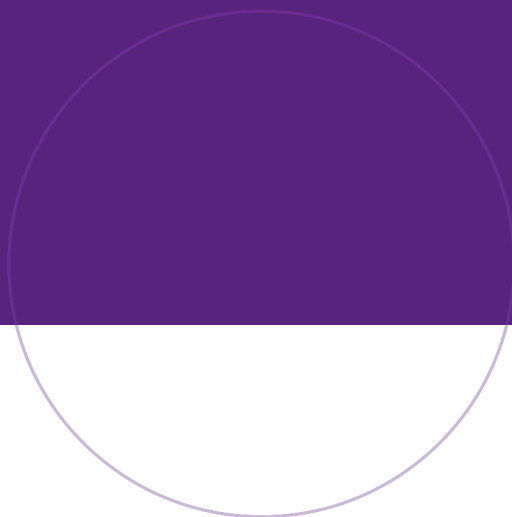
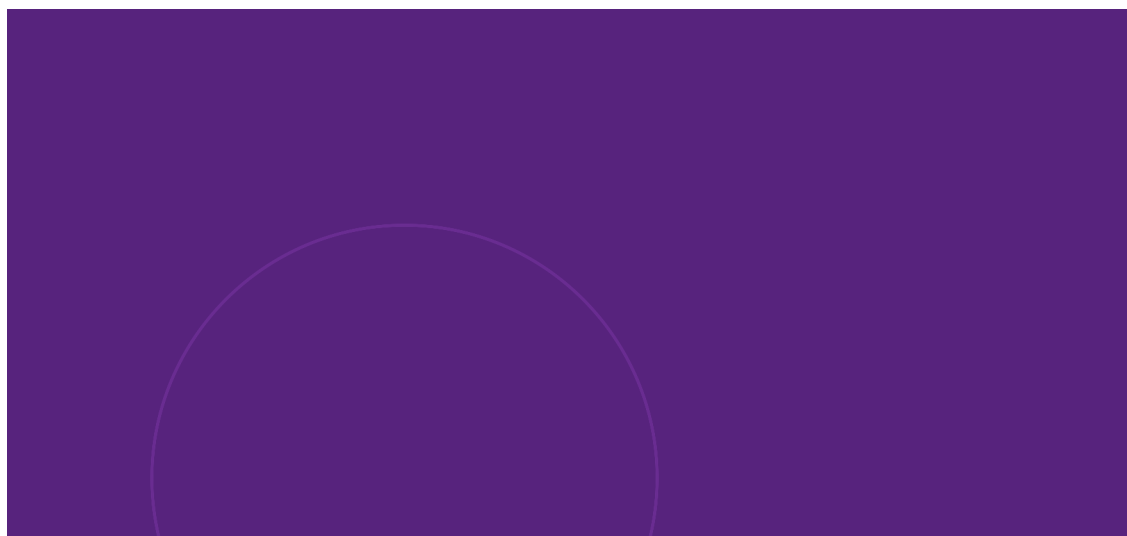
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