

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Since the severing diplomatic ties in 1980, diplomacy between Iran and United States has been significantly hampered by a lack of high-level diplomatic-engagement. However, it is arguably one of the remarkable aspects of the success nuclear deal in 2015 was Iran and US engagement over *Twitter*. This research aims to answer the following question: “*How does Twitter serves as a diplomatic tool for Iran and US during the nuclear negotiation process between 2013 to 2015?*”. It was discovered that *Twitter* serves as an alternative means of communication for states in particular with a severed diplomatic relation. During the nuclear negotiation process, Iran and US sustained *Twitter* communication signified their diplomatic outreach in resolving the nuclear dispute which brought the agreement to fruition.

Iran’s and US use of *Twitter* as a diplomatic tool reflected an incremental change throughout the 3 years of negotiations. The adoption of digital tools able to manage such changes between Iran and US relations towards a positive shift. It provides diplomats with the ability to monitor potential sources of change in a real-time environment. This allows states to draw distinctions between potential allies and rivals based on assessing the sources of change. Hence, Iran’s and US able to determine the changing trends in managing their relations during the nuclear negotiation process.

Although digital diplomacy contributes new approaches of conducting diplomacy, the core aspects of traditional diplomacy remained unchanged. The adoption of digital tools added a real-time dimension to diplomacy which accelerated the pace of diplomatic communication. Social media platforms such as *Twitter* facilitates a platform for states to engage and form dialogue in pursuit of foreign policy goals. This serves as an alternative medium for states in particular with severed diplomatic ties such as Iran and US. It allows them to interact on a daily basis prompting an incremental change between their relations.

Twitter offers the use of hashtags to draw attention towards specific subject. For example, when Iran and US used the phrase ‘mutual political #will’ in their *tweets* during the negotiation. Their *tweets* signify an intention to work towards a positive outcome as negotiations continued. An intention that indicated an opening towards *rapprochement* and arguably overcome the hostilities between the two states. In addition, the hashtag #IranTalks was also frequently used in Iran and US *tweets* to highlight progress of the drafting nuclear agreement.

The use of *Twitter* as a diplomatic tool between Iran and US began after both state leaders held their first direct talk through a phone call in 2013. The news of the conversation was conveyed through a series of *tweets* from Iran’s president Hassan Rouhani and US White House *Twitter* account. Both leaders expressed an optimistic beginning and determination to solve the nuclear issue swiftly through their *tweets*. Their *tweets* are considered as a symbol of diplomatic outreach to indicate an intention in pursuit of a nuclear agreement. Thus,

Interaction between Iran and US through *Twitter* represents the prospect of moving beyond the historical grievances.

With only 140 characters, the space restrictions of *Twitter* forced targeted communication around an issue of interest. For instance, when Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had *tweeted* regarding France veto and the controversial situation of US Republican senators' letter. Zarif used *Twitter* as a diplomatic tool to publicly express his disappointment at France's veto on the nuclear draft agreement. Furthermore, Zarif also used *Twitter* in response to the US Republican senators' letter by directly 'mention' US Senator Tom Cotton's *Twitter* account. Iran's response to US illustrates the use of *Twitter* as a diplomatic tool for communication.

Iran and United States *Twitter* use as a diplomatic tool also increased engagement and interaction which supports the strengthening of a severed diplomatic relation. *Twitter* provides Iran and US a platform for communication to resolve the nuclear dispute and indicate its desire to participate in the negotiation process. Both Iran and US also perceived the negotiation as an opportunity to attain their interest in which *Twitter* can accommodate to convey their messages. For Iran, the potential opportunity to relieve the stress of sanctions. While for US is preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. In 2015, the establishment of *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (JCPOA) represents Iran's and US interest achievement through this deal.

To conclude, traditional diplomacy could not mediate in resolving Iran's nuclear dispute due to the severed diplomatic ties between both states. However, *Twitter* as one of the digital diplomacy channels provides an alternative means of communication for states particularly with a severed diplomatic tie. Iran and US utilized *Twitter* as a diplomatic tool to engage and conduct diplomatic outreach during the nuclear negotiation process. Furthermore, the use of *Twitter* over the period of 3 years between Iran and US throughout the negotiation process illustrates an incremental change managed through digital diplomacy. Thus, sustained *Twitter* communication between Iran and US arguably one of the key aspects that brought JCPOA agreement came to fruition.

Despite a handful of data collected, this research still has limitation due to inaccessible archived *tweets*. This means that the result of this research will possibly varies overtime if those *tweets* were able to obtain. The role of public opinion and other actors such as stakeholders was also not included in this research which perhaps might be a contributing factor to the changes between Iran and US relations during the nuclear negotiation process. This thesis only limits to state actors throughout 2013 to 2015 and has weakness on further analyzing the numbers of *tweets* which included specific hashtags such as #IranTalks and 'mutual respect' used throughout the negotiation, thus encourage other researchers to continue this research. On a final note, the author hopes that this research will provide an insight into a new perspective of digital diplomacy as well as leads to further studies that focus on the differences between developing and developed countries in the use of digital diplomacy as experienced by Iran and US.

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