The Influence of Groups in Foreign Policy Formulation: Analysis of Israel's Policy on Iran's Nuclear Agreement

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Abstract: As a critical actor in the issue of Iran's nuclear deal, Israel's foreign policy is rather different from many others': Israel disagrees with both Iran's nuclear deal and their nuclear development in general. Israel's foreign policy, then, becomes interesting to discuss, especially by analyzing the factors that influence the decision making of their policy. In this article, therational policy model derived from the group level of analysis is used to analyze and elaborate the decision making process of Israel's foreign policy toward Iran's nuclear deal. This article argues that the result of Israel's decision making process for their foreign policy is influeced by group actors surrounding Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu which are the Inner Cabinet and the Security Cabinet. This article finds that even though there is indeed influence from group actors in the decision making process of Israel's foreign policy, said influence is rather complementary because decisions issued by the group actors heavily depend on several particular factors that cannot be explained by the group level of analysis.

1   INTRODUCTION

Behind the Joint Comprehensive Action Agreement (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Russia, Britain, the United States and Germany) that have been implemented, there is still disagreement over Iran's nuclear development. In general, this is due to the distrust, scepticism and fear of the state that the existing agreement is not an effective form of prevention against Iran. Saudi Arabia, for example, as a Middle East country is seen most likely to use nuclear weapons because it considers Iran as an enemy and threats to the position of regional hegemonic positions and to its own internal monarchy (Einhorn and Nephew 2016, vii). The disagreement also came from Israel, the actor who best accentuated the negative response, when Israel was actually increasingly free from security threats with the deal (Gillon 2017). Israel's strong refusal of the JCPOA agreement also struck me as seeing that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that Iran has complied with the terms of the deal by dismantling and removing 2/3 of its centrifugal, reducing the 98% uranium stock by sending 25,000 pounds of uranium out of the country, and giving open access to its nuclear facilities-

something that Iran had never done before (Gillet 2017).

Based on the background, the author draws the research question: Why did Israel formulate foreign policy to refuse Iran's nuclear development and JCPOA agreement? To answer that question, the author will first map explanandum and explanans in this article. Explanandum of the case study is Israeli policy against Iran's nuclear issue itself. Then, the explanation is described further by using group-level analysis. More specifically, the author uses a rational-policy model in that group's variables. The author argue that Israel's foreign policy, which is oriented towards denial of any nuclear development, was formulated because of the great influence of group actors around Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

2   GROUPS VARIABLE IN LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

To analyze the policy of a country, there are a number of variables in the level of analysis that can be used; one of them is the group variable. In a group variable, a country's foreign policy is not only formulated by an individual but by a group of individuals or

different decision units at different times following the issues being discussed. The existing unit decisions vary in size; structured in a formal or inadequate manner, having various good names, the junta, the cabinet, the coalition, the parliaments-but whatever it is called, they formulate collective foreign policy. Of the many decision units, the highest position is held by a person or a group that is in a position when he can not only take policy but also can prevent the occurrence of foreign policy reversal efforts by other groups within the government (Breuning 2007, 86).

Breuning (2007, 89) describes that three are approaches in managing advisory systems at the executive level: (1) formalistic, (2) competitive, and (3) collegial. The formalistic approach underscores the existence of a hierarchical structure with a clear chain of command. In this approach, it is explained that their respective counsellors inform leaders about aspects of a problem according to their expertise and under the jurisdiction of their department. Leaders who use this approach are the kinds of leaders who seek to create a regular decision-making process by prioritizing analysis and how to make the "best" decision (Breuning 2007, 89). However, the formalistic approach has the disadvantage that a leader does not know whether there is a piece of information that is intentionally left out or distorted when he receives it. This weakness can be overcome by the second approach of a competitive approach that explains how leaders, in managing executives, access information from multiple sources (Breuning 2007, 90). In this approach the potential for conflict is possible; this is because how advisors have a high role in the decision-making process, so there is a tendency for counsellors who provide incomplete or impartial information. This approach, if used properly, can result in creative, politically acceptable solutions, and can be done bureaucratically. Different from a competitive approach, the focus of a collegial approach is on taking advantage of a competitive approach-that is, the number of sources of information-and focusing the use of that information through teamwork rather than competition. To ensure that a collegial approach works well, according to Breuning (2007, 91), a balance between diversity of opinions, mediation of differences, and encouragement of the group; and herein lies the difficulty of the approach itself.

After describing these three approaches, Breuning (2007, 95-96) outlines three models to explain the processes of foreign policy making in a country: (1) rational policy model, (2) organizational process model, and (3) bureaucratic political model. The rational policy model assumes that foreign policy is made as if a single rational decision maker analyzes strategic issues and, once the problem has been successfully defined, selects the policy response of the options. The process of decision-making in this model is divided into four steps: (1) identification of national interests, (2) identification of options, (2) cost/benefit analysis of options, and (4) selection of best policy alternatives that serve the interests. The weakness of this model lies in how this model does not take into account the possibility of distorting information in complex advisory systems consisting of individuals, departments, and agents; this model also does not take into account the identification of national interests that do not have to be openly (Breuning 2007, 96). Meanwhile, the organizational process model sees the government as a collectively coordinated organization centrally above, each having expertise in its field of priority and different perceptions.Breuning (2007, 97) writes that the decision-making process of this model departs from (1) the termination of preference by experts and organizational interests, towards (2) adaptation of standard operational procedures (SOPs), to ultimately produce (3) the feasibility of determining policy choices. According to this model, inadequate policy responses are not the result of failure to evaluate the risks and benefits of each option objectively but from the existing organizational weaknesses. The final model, the bureaucratic political model focuses on the role of individuals within government organizations, explains that individuals have specific roles: (1) they lead, or work within, a particular agency or department; and (2) they are placed at specific locations within a hierarchical structure of the agency or department (Breuning 2007, 97). Bureaucratic political models emphasize that the advisory and priority advisors are shaped by the organization and their personal ambitions and interests; so policy becomes the end result of complex bargaining action at various levels-be it hierarchically or horizontally.

In a government cabinet as a small-group decision unit, the prime minister can become a dominant figure even though the responsibilities of cabinet members as government executives are collective. Breuning (2007, 99) also noted that small groups such as government cabinets have a tendency to resemble think tanks and command centers. In think tanks, a reliable group of advisers will usually use the information even if it is incomplete to jointly construct representations of a foreign policy issue, determine the significance of the problem from other problems, and debate ways to respond. Meanwhile, the command center uses the role of think tank to choose from a set of available options, evaluate them,

choose the most possible, and ultimately formulate a decision. The command center is where the advisors formulate foreign policy action. The similarity of the think tank and command center is how the small group has the same function of involvement in the real action of the formulation of the decision itself. In addition, they also have additional functions that are (1) helping the government to show that they are a group working together for the national interest, (2) as a refuge, and (3) functioning as 'smoke screens' behind the informal group that performs the real action of the formulation of the decision itself (Breuning 2007, 100-101).

In a case study of Israel's foreign policy on the issue of Iran's nuclear deal, the authors used a rational policy model to analyze the formulation of policies undertaken by the Israeli government. The author argues that Israel's foreign policy on the Iranian nuclear issue, which is oriented in the absence of any nuclear development, was formulated because of the influence of group actors around Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Some of the most significant group actors are the Cabinet of Security and the Inner Cabinet of Israel.

3 CASE STUDY OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR AGREEMENT AND ISRAEL'S PERSPECTIVE

The talks aimed at preventing Iran from developing and starting a nuclear weapons competition eventually resulted in a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 countries on July 14, 2015. The JCPOA is aimed at reducing Iran's uranium holding capacity and redesigning a plutonium production reactor which has been planned by Iran, as well as eliminating Iran's capability to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons for the next ten to fifteen years; all done to ensure that Iran's nuclear program is only used for harmless purposes. In its implementation, JCPOA needs the help of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to monitor the implementation of the agreement because the IAEA is perceived to be able to ensure Iran's compliance; then instead, JCPOA requested a temporary suspension of nuclear-related sanctions granted to Iran by the United States, the European Union, and the Security Council (Katzman and Kerr 2016, 1). The Iranian parliament agreed that the JCPOA agreement would be effective on October 18, 2016, later known as Adoption Day. Subsequently, there was the Implementation Day warning on

January 16, 2016 after the IAEA ensured Iran's compliance with its nuclear-use regulations set forth in JCPOA. Three components in Iran's nuclear program are included in the points of agreement, namely (1) the production of physical materials through the enrichment of uranium, (2) weapons focused on the conversion of fissile material to nuclear weapons, and (3) the production of the delivery system, can bring weapons to the target that has been selected (Kuperwasser 2015, 11).

There are a number of different reactions to Iran's nuclear deal in the Middle East. Israel-more specifically, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu-has the most vocal negative voice among other countries, even though Israeli high-level officials have been consulted during the deal negotiations and are working with the United States in order to ensure the enforcement of Iran's compliance. Turkey and Egypt have a general positive response because they do not burden the resolution of Iran's long-standing nuclear issue and accept how the JCPOA allows Iran to defend its enrichment program; this contradicts the likes of Israel, some Gulf states, and the United States opposition to the deal. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states-as a coalition of the United States-have also endorsed Iran's nuclear deal openly, including during a summit of the United States-GCC Summit in Riyadh in April 2016. Even so, there are still some countries in the East Middle, mainly Arab Sunni countries, who object to the deal. Their concerns include: (1) existing agreements will only gain time and not prevent Iran from possessing nuclear weapons, (2) the agreement does not improve Iranian behavior that makes the Middle East unstable and will aggravate conditions, and (3) the existing agreement puts the traditional coalition of the United States in the Middle East at an unfavorable position (Einhorn and Nephew 2016, vi).

Israel, although not a participant of the deal, remains an influential major actor in the dynamics of existing discussions and is affected by the impacts of the development of Iran's nuclear program. During this time, Israel continues to be consistent in shaping a strategy of coercion or coercion against Iran's program because Israel sees that the current agreement is being seen as a form of victory and the first step of Iran's efforts to become a regional hegemony. Israel believes that the Iranian regime will only replace its views or objectives and release nuclear aspirations if coerced by a combination of preventive measures, economic sanctions, and credible military threats (Kuperwasser 2015, 8). The combination is the best way to block the nuclear program and ensure that there is no need to use any

direct military action. The stronger the military threat, the less likely that military action will actually take place; and the stronger the pressure on Iran, the more likely it will be that Iran will approve more significant concessions. Moreover, Israel sees that such forms of coercion can encourage, convince, and change Iran's perceptions into how they do not have enough capability to become nuclear weapon state.

Kuperwasser (2015, 24) states that the Israeli strategy requires a combination of direct action and pressure while accompanied by the involvement of the international community-especially the United States in order to exert pressure on territories outside the scope of Israel's strategy through direct action. Despite a number of differences, cooperation with the United States is a fundamental component of Israel's strategy. Although Israel and the United States share a common goal-that is, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons-and working together to achieve this goal, both have different views on some issues-which then result in different behavior toward threats, nuclear concessions to Iran, and regional roles Iran. While Washington wants to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, the prevention form Jerusalem wants is for Iran not to have any capability to produce nuclear weapons (Kuperwasser 2015, 8). The difference in both positions can also be seen in 2012 when the tensions between Israel and the United States increased because the Obama administration at that time did not approve of Israel's plans to launch a military strike against Iran while at the same time the United States was running diplomacy between P5+1 and Iran (Parsi 2017). In the end, Israel up until now insisted on its stand to disagree with Iran's nuclear development despite the adaptation of the JCPOA agreement.

4 ANALYSIS OF ISRAEL'S FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION

To see the decision unit in the formulation of Israeli state policy, it is necessary to understand the Israeli political system first. Like a country that embraces a multiparty parliamentary democracy system in general, Israel has three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch is headed by the prime minister who has the highest power in government as head of government because the role of the president in Israel as a head of state is merely ceremonial. Therefore, Prime Minister Netanyahu becomes the ultimate decision unit in the

Israeli context. Meanwhile, Israel's legislative branch consists of a Knesset (parliament of Israel) consisting of 120 members of parliament-in which the prime minister also becomes the leader of the Knesset coalition. 120 Knesset MPs also came from various parties, provided that the lead party coalition must hold at least 61 seats out of the 120 available. Subsequently, the judicial branch consists of courts and the Supreme Court, which based its work on a set of Basic Laws that functioned like constitutional law in general. In addition to these three branches, there are also two groups as a decision unit that has an important role in the Israeli government is the Security Cabinet and Kainet Dalam.

The first decision unit was the In Cabinet composed of Israeli political figures with different backgrounds as Netanyahu's chief advisor. The first figure in this group is Ron Dermer as Israel's ambassador to the United States who is also Netanyahu's believer. The Post (2017) reported that Dermer was instrumental in setting up Netanyahu's controversial speech to the US Congress in 2015 as part of Israel's effort to subvert Iran's nuclear deal at the time being fought by former US president Barack Obama. Jerusalem Post in May 2016, Dermer did not seem to regret his actions even though the speech dropped his reputation as an ambassador by stating that,

"In my eyes, the prime minister fulfilled a fundamental moral obligation to speak out about a potential threat [by Iran] to the survival of our country. This was a sovereign right that the Jewish people were long denied, and the failure to exercise that right would have been a gross dereliction of his duty as prime minister of Israel" (Jerusalem Post 2016).

From the above quote, it is understandable that Dermer considers it commonplace when a prime minister when he undertakes his duty to voice the dangers brought by Iran through the development of its nuclear program (Tibon 2017); and it implies Dermer's support for Netanyahu in that context. It also shows both Dermer and Netanyahu's closeness and Dermer's influence over Netanyahu's decision.

Still in the Inner Cabinet, the second influential figure is Yoav Horowitz, Netanyahu's chief of staff who in October 2017 called on the Jewish National Fund to provide 1.14 billion dollars for defense and military budgets in order to prevent Iran's nuclear threat against Israel (Asharq Al-Awsat 2017). The third figure is Dr. Jonathan Schachter, Netanyahu's foreign policy adviser who always attends a cabinet meeting on Israeli foreign policy issues (Jerusalem Post 2017). In a speech he delivered in May 2015,

Schachter expressed the same worries as Netanyahu: that Israel's most important issue at the time was not conflict with Palestinian or terrorism but Iran's nuclear issue. Schachter emphasized that Netanyahu "can not only move on" in rejecting Iran's nuclear development and, like Netanyahu, he showed skepticism over the then-design JCPOA agreement (Jerusalem of Gold t.t.). The fourth figure is Eli Groner as director general of the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the design and implementation of all domestic policies. The author sees that Netanyahu chose Groner because as a former economic attache in Washington, Groner is certainly familiar with all aspects of Israel-US economic relations; and this consideration is urgently needed given the economic relation of both could be an aspect affected by the decision taken by Netanyahu, especially those not in harmony with the US decision. The fifth figure is Eliezer Toledano, Netanyahu's military secretary since 2015, who is in charge of providing the latest news on security issues and stony military operations and in coordination between state intelligence and state security agencies. The last figure is Eitan Ben-David as chairman of the National Security Council who has many duties in coordination between Israel and the United States National Security Council especially related to cooperation and assistance. Of course, it makes sense that Netanyahu's Cabinet contains political figures who have a big role in the aspect of national defense and security and/or relations with the United States because, according to the rational policy model, foreign policy is largely determined by the national interests of the country itself, and Israel's national interest in this case is protection of its national security from Iran's nuclear threat.

The next decision unit is the Security Cabinet of Israel consisting of 14 members of government figures including Prime Minister (concurrently Minister of Foreign Affairs), Minister of Defense, Minister of Internal Security, Minister of Justice, Minister of Finance, Minister of Interior, Minister of Transport, Minister of Construction, Minister Immigration, the Minister of Energy and Water Resources, the Attorney General, and the Head of the Security Council. Under Israeli law, the Security Cabinet has primary responsibility in making decisions to attack Iran despite the existence of a precedence allowing all members of the Israeli executive cabinet to approve decisions made by the Security Cabinet (Kern and Reed t.t.). Since the JCPOA-related negotiations are still adaptable to the drafting process, the Israeli Security Cabinet has voiced disagreement over the terms of the agreement

in April 2015 (Al Jazeera 2015). The Security Cabinet also shared the view of Netanyahu over Iran's ambitions to become a major force through nuclear use and this can be seen from Israel Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman's statement in October 2017 after an Iranian antibalistic missile test:

"The ballistic missile that was fired by Iran is not only a provocation and a slap in the face for the United States and its allies — and an attempt to test them — but also further proof of the Iranian ambitions to become a world power and threaten countries in the Middle East and all the countries of the free world" (Times of Israel 2017).

Although the Security Cabinet retains its position in rejecting the JCPOA to date, in its dynamics there are some Cabinet members who disagree on Iran-such as the Interior Minister and Minister of Transport-and can prevent Netanyahu from attacking Iran; this can be seen from how until now Netanyahu has not issued a decision to attack Iran. This is an example of the second and third steps in the decision-making process based on a rational policy model that is the identification of options and cost/benefit analysis after successfully identifying the state's interest: the attack on Iran is not the only option to be elected even in harmony with the state's interest; and although Netanyahu had a strong stance in the plan of attack, there were influential group actors-though not specific to what extent-and could change their stance and prevent Netanyahu from deciding to ultimately strike Iran. The decision not to attack can also be seen as an alternative policy that is still in line with Israeli national interests.

The final decisions of the unit, namely the ultimate decision unit, are Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In addition to the fact that he is the head of government who has a share in the internal government unit decision, the Security Cabinet and the Cabinet, Netanyahu's position as ultimate decision unit can also be seen from how Netanyahu chairs the Likud Party as a majority government in the Knesset. The influence of group actors has finally been translated by Netanyahu into its international activity in the last five years through speeches before the UN General Assembly. In 2012, Netanyahu stated that Iran's nuclear program is the world's biggest threat that can only be prevented by "clear red lines"; even, Netanyahu added in his speech that he has prevented Iran from developing its nuclear weapons "for more than 15 years" (Times of Israel 2012). One year later, Netanyahu reminded the world to "not be fooled by the Iranian regime" and emphasized that what Iran developed was a nuclear weapon (Times of Israel 2013). The same sentiment is expressed in

2014, but this time Netanyahu added that regional peace is still possible (Haaretz 2014). In 2015, Netanyahu's controversial speech to the US Congress explicitly stated that Iran's nuclear program was "very bad" and that the world would be better "without it" (Calamur 2015) .Two years later in 2017, Netanyahu again warned Iran of "serious danger" of engaging with Israel (Times of Israel 2017). This shows the role of Netanyahu as the ultimate decision unit in the Israeli government that is seen by the rational policy model as the key actor of foreign policy formulation itself.

5 CONCLUSION

The process of formulating Israel's foreign policy that does not agree with either Iran's nuclear deal or development is generally influenced by a number of factors; one of which is the Israeli internal group actors. In analyzing it, the authors used a rational policy model derived from the level of group analysis of two of Netanyahu's closest group of actors namely the Inner Cabinet and the Security Cabinet. Through the model, it is known that the influence of the Inner Cabinet Netanyahu which contains political figures by having a big role in aspects of national defense and security and/or relations with the United States are in harmony with Israel's national interest, namely protection of Israel's national security from all forms of Iran's nuclear threat. In the Security Cabinet, it can be seen that the opinions of several different figures from Netanyahu's opinion of attacking Iran ultimately influenced Netanyahu's policy of not attacking Iran until today. The final result of these influences was then translated by Netanyahu as the ultimate decision unit in government through his speeches at international level. In the end, the authors found that the influence of group actors on Israeli foreign policy formulated by Netanyahu is more inclined to be complementary, since the small decisions issued by the group actors also depend on a number of other factors can not be explained by the level of group analysis in this article.

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