

# Israel's Foreign Policy Analysis on Iran's Nuclear Agreement using National Attribute Level of Analysis

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**Abstract:** It has been known that all actions taken by the state are based on their national interests. In the struggle to get their national interest, states make foreign decision-making which is decided by many considerations in terms of statehood possessed by the state and external state actors. In this paper, the author will attempt to analyze the foreign policy Israel pursues in response to Iran's nuclear deal in 2015 using one level of analysis in the foreign policy analysis study, namely national attribute. The author will first explain the background of the case as well as what foreign policy Israel made towards a nuclear Iran. The discussion then proceeds to the theoretical review of the level of analysis of national attributes and their coverage variables. Then, the author will analyze Israeli foreign policy by using national attribute coverage variable and closed by the final conclusion of the author's analysis.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In international relations, state as the main actor play an important role in maintaining good relations but also able to bear the national interest of the country. Achieving the national interest itself can be done through the country's foreign policy making. According to Breuning's (2007) statement in his writings, foreign policy is a state policy against an environment outside his territorial boundaries. Traditionally, the purpose of policy-making is to safeguard and enhance the strength and security of a country or be equated as its national interest. Issues relating to foreign policy are generally about economic, security, environment, human rights, population, energy, and humanitarianism. The action decided by the head of state itself is also undertaken by every country in the world including Israel.

Israel is the only country in the world located in the Middle East region and ruled by Islamic countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Besides that, there are also Palestinians who are still involved in a conflict with Israel related to the state. Moreover, the issues are increasingly aggravated by Trump's recognition of the Palestinian city of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, reflecting the terms of the United Nations that previously agreed them (Masters and Halasz 2017). Back to the discussion, Israel in its region is called the most developed country with high economic capability. This then encourages the

country to increase its military budget because of the border conflicts with Palestinians that involving armed action.

However, in this paper, the author focus will be more directed to Iran's nuclear deal that considered unsatisfactory by Israel. Judging from its background, Iran has had nuclear weapons from the 1950s, aided by Western support with claims that its development is based on the interests of peace (Bruno 2010). This is certainly not necessarily shared by other countries, especially the Middle East countries that are neighbors of Iran because of their suspicion and fear of nuclear abuses for weapons development. This can be seen by the rapid increase of the country's uranium enrichment that can be used to form nuclear weapons, the Shahab-3 whose range of fire is expected to reach Israel and its surrounding countries (Kuperwasser 2015). This has certainly raised concern for Israel's national security and thus, Israel intervened with the P5+1 countries, namely the United States, Britain, China, France, Russia and Germany, in negotiations to reach agreement on Iran's nuclear development.

Nuclear development by Iran as an Islamic state is considered as a big threat by Israel as there is a negative view of Muslims against the Jews. This is related to the border conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as a Muslim country. Moreover, the supreme leader of Israel, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in 2015 once declared that if all Muslims and Palestinians are united, Israel will not exist within 25

years so that the Jewish state should be destroyed (Deardem 2016: TOI Staff 2015). In response, although Israel is not a country actively involved in Iranian nuclear talks held by the P5+1 countries, Israel has some of its foreign policy in response to Iran's nuclear deal to tense down and eliminated war potential in the region.

Based on Kuperwasser's work (2015), Israel has proximity to the United States in many ways including Iran's nuclear deal. However, it turns out that both countries are in different perspective related to what policies should be applied to Iran in order to create regional stability. The United States seeks to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons while Israel is more to prevent Iran from having capabilities in the production of nuclear weapons and this can only be done through coercive measures such as a combination of preventive operations, diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and credible military threats. In addition, Israel also has several policy frameworks addressed to Israel such as preventing the development and research of Iran's nuclear, removing uranium enrichment materials from Iran, closing the nuclear development facility at Fordow, and reducing the number of nuclear development machines at Natanz. Furthermore, Israel also compels Iran to provide all the requested data related to its nuclear development activities and seeks the US congress to re-evaluate the deal that Israel considers to be less significant in stopping Iran's nuclear development (Kuperwasser 2015; Kaye 2016).

The author then will analyze the policies using one of the analytical tools available in foreign policy analysis studies. The tool is the national attributes level of analysis by looking at the elements or variables that are present in it and then make the element or variable as the reason behind the decision of foreign policy of the country. In this case, the author will attempt to elaborate Israel's foreign policy on Iran's nuclear deal through the variables at the national attribute level of analysis. The authors then continue to discuss the explanation about the basic principles and the theoretical consequences of national attributes the level of analysis in the next section.

## 2 THEORITICAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL ATTRIBUTE LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

Hudson (2014) in his writing sees the level of analysis as an approach at the macro level in understanding the

foreign policy of a country. The purpose of the explanatory mode is be able to show how certain values at this macro level lead to the probability distribution of the particular types of foreign policy choices and how they can influence the decision-making of foreign policy in a particular context. Furthermore, the national attribute is a national power possessed by a tangible and intangible state. The elements that make up the national power are the size of the country, natural resources, geographic conditions, demographics, political systems, military forces, and economic capabilities (Hudson 2014). All these elements then used by the state in forming its national image that determines the national behavior of the country itself in the eyes of the international community (Lebovic 1985).

Basically, there are no countries that do not have national attributes. Nevertheless, the elements of the national attributes possessed by every country in the world are relative in nature so generalizations can not be made in the context of this level of analysis (Hudson 2014). For example, in this world there are countries with large geographical size like China, and also small like Singapore, as well as core countries with excellent economic power such as the United States, and periphery countries with weak economic power like Bangladesh. The capabilities possessed by each country have influential element in decision-making from foreign policy in international politics. Therefore, the author will further discuss about each of the national attributes' elements of countries. Generally, countries with superior capability are more noticed in comparison with the inferior power states (Lebovic 1985, Elman 1995).

The first element is size that becomes one of the factors of a country's decision-making. Countries with large areas primarily play more actively in foreign policy making. On the other hand, countries with small areas have only limited resources, so their national strength is low with the exception of certain countries such as Singapore. Small countries generally make alliance with a larger country in order to survive. However, neutral options may also be selected if the country is between two major conflicting states (Hudson 2014). The second element is the existence of natural resources in foreign policy making which is seen from its availability, such as petroleum, mineral, agriculture, and so on. Natural resources are the main requirement of each country so that this element has the power to control other needy parties like for example in China which halt its export of earth metal to Japan because Japan detains Chinese fishermen on illegal fishing charges in Japanese waters.

The third element is the geography like the boundaries between countries that play an important role in the formation of foreign policy in relation to geopolitics. Countries with more restrictions are generally more often involved in regional conflicts than countries with few borders. As an example is Russia where border conflicts have become a matter of security in this contemporary era given its vast territory so that its border touches many countries (Hudson 2014). The fourth is a demographic that is identical with the characteristics of the people of the country. Some of the variables seen in this element are gender, age, wealth, ethnicity, religion, and so on. Then, this distributions used by the government to formulate their foreign policy. For example, Canada began to experience graying population so that its government facilitated the flow of migration into the country to meet the needs of jobs that lack human resources.

The fifth element is the political system that forms the system of government of a country. The political system can be formed from a pre-existing heritage or from the condition of the international system so that its foreign policy making is also based on some of these (Lebovic 1985). As an example is a democratic state that is generally in harmony with other democratic states and this situation create a democratic peace. The sixth element is the military capability that becomes the most important national attribute in the formulation of a country's foreign policy. This is because superior military force generally leads to coercive diplomacy that can be used to force a particular party to obey (Hudson 2014). The possession of mass destructive weapons then becomes a distinct strategic advantage for the owner country and has a major influence on changing the foreign policy situation of other countries as it did in the case of North Korea. The last element is the economic capability that becomes variable in the behavior of a country by looking at the pattern of dependency and interdependence of its economy. How the state uses its economic instruments as aid, lending, investment, currency manipulation, debt, embargoes, sanctions, etc. then depends on the capabilities of the country's economy (Blanchard et al. 2000 in Hudson 2014). Countries with high economic power then able to use these capabilities to secure their foreign policy objectives.

### **3 NATIONAL ATTRIBUTES ANALYSIS WITH ISRAEL'S POLICY ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR**

As the authors have pointed out in the previous section, all variables in the national attributes level of analysis such as state size, natural resources, geography, demographic characteristics, political systems and economic and military capabilities can be used to explain why a country choose a certain foreign policy. However, in related to these variables, when associated with Israel's foreign policy towards Iran, the authors chose to use geographical variables, demographic characteristics, political systems, and military capabilities that possessed by Israel. The explanation behind the author decision to choose these variables will be explain in this section along with the others variables that the author does not use.

Viewing from its geography, Israel is one of the sovereign nations located in the east of the Mediterranean Sea and is in the same region as Iran, the Middle East region. The two countries essentially have the same geopolitical interest, namely to protect themselves and fend off the presence of Soviet communism during the Cold War, as well as the Pan-Arabism dispersion (Kaye et al., 2011). However, this is instantly changing with the fact that Iran is developing its nuclear arsenal to destroy Israel as a Jewish state that deprives the rights and territories of the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people. Although the two countries do not directly border territorially, they still engage in considerable tension because Iran's nuclear range that can include Israel is seen from its geographical location not far behind, which is about 1,500 kilometers. Thus, based on its geographical considerations, Israel puts emphasis on cessation of Iran's nuclear profile for the security of its country.

Furthermore, demographic characteristics also become exploratory variables that are quite interesting to discuss. In this element, the author is more inclined to see that the religion adopted and become the life guard of the vast majority of Israeli society, Jews, has a great influence on Israeli foreign policy making. Consciously surrounded by an Islamic state with a poor perception of it due to the unfinished border conflict with Palestine and also the deprivation of the rights of Muslims in the land belonging to Israel-Palestine, the Israeli government then really upholds the principle that its territory is Eretz Yisrael, namely the holy land of the Jews that God gave them for each application of their foreign policy (Keith 1844).

The author sees that Israel will not give up in maintaining its regional identity. This is as part of the national interest of the country to survive as the only Jewish state in the world. Their strong will can be traced to the Holocaust movement, the massacre of Jews by Germany, which threatened the existence of the Jews themselves. The condition then reflected in Israeli policies in the Iran's nuclear deal which is very preventive. The policy aim to prevent Iran's nuclear capability that could destroy the country because allegedly, the proliferation of Iran's nuclear weapons is aimed at the destruction of the Jews and form a new formation of the Central Asian region that can change the world order (Dearden 2016; Kuperwasser 2015). Thus, Israel contributes as much as possible in taking steps in Iran's nuclear response to the United States despite the difference of the two countries' view of what should be done to Iran.

The next element that will use to analyze is the political system of Israel's national attributes. Having a parliamentary democratic government system, Israel is indirectly close to the United States because both countries are democratic countries. The political understanding shared by the two countries then made Israel not hesitate to ask for help from the United States regarding what to do with Iran's nuclear proliferation in order to achieve international peace and stability. One of Israel's most intense policies on democracy can be seen in its request to Iran to provide all the data requested in related of all its nuclear development activities (Kuperwasser 2015). This policy requires transparency and openness that available in the democratic systems.

Moreover, Israel also has no hesitation in asking the United States to re-evaluate Iran's nuclear deal. This is because Israel feels lacks a deterrent effect on Iran as a form of freedom of speech to fellow democracies. In addition, Iran as an opposition country has a political system with a weak democracy or even the democracy of this country is only limited to the outer wrapper alone, so this triggers a separate problem for Israel and Iran given that the democratic country will tend to conflict with non-democratic countries as an effort to spread its democratic values. This condition then illustrated by the coerciveness of Israel's policy. In democratic peace theory, the fellow democratic countries do not conflict with each other. Israel sees the one solution that can be applied to cope with Iran's nuclear deal is by replacing Iran's current regime with the pro-Western regime which is more pragmatic (Kuperwasser 2015; Inbar 2008).

The discussion then goes on to the next element of national attribute, namely military capability. In this case, Israel can be categorized as a strong country

because of the military compulsory program for both men and women as well as sophisticated weapons and military equipment. In fact, the power of Israeli military capability can explain the arbitrary behavior of the country or often ignore the resolution formulated by the United Nations in the use of military force (Hudson 2014). Still related to military power, some innovations have created by Israel, like armed robot vehicles that used for its territorial border patrol, missile batteries for detecting threats, mini satellites for spies, Merkava secret tanks, and so forth (Katz 2017). However, it should be noted that the Israeli military capability is inseparable from the large amount of military aid from its friendly country, the United States. Thus, the arms of this country considered advanced.

Israel's policy-making on Iran certainly has a strong influence because of this military capability even though Israel is not a global actor and its ability to directly confront Iran is limited. One of the reasons for such strong influence is that of its intelligence capabilities in the collection, research and operations carried out by the Israeli military secret service which has made a major contribution to Iran's nuclear development report primarily discussed by the P5+1 countries (Kupperwasser 2015). Israel believes that military use is necessary in response to this case because, when Iran realizes the power of military capability possessed by Israel, it is unlikely that Iran will halt its nuclear development. Thus, Israel believes its increasingly strong military capability will further encourage the regional stability without Iran's nuclear.

Military capabilities from Israel also can be used to embody various behaviors and traits. Israel has a policy that does not hesitate and even responds to the need to act directly to Iran so that the Iran's nuclear can be eliminated immediately. This is also supported by the fact that in 1988, 2003, and 2013 the United States revealed its military security against Iran that made Iran surrender in the attempt of destruction of shipments in the Strait of Hormuz. In addition, the military also did not create Iran from itself to raise its 20% uranium stock, a step-by-step that Israel needs (Kuperwasser 2015). These things then explain why Israel has a high power over military power (Benziman and Romm 2014).

Some of the elements of the national attributes that the authors describe earlier, in author's opinion are the reason behind Israel's foreign policy making that has a clear effect in responding to Iran's nuclear proliferation. The author does not include other national attributes such as country size and the presence of natural resources due to their lack of



relevance. The size of the unarguably large state of Israel does not limit its international behavior, which is categorized active because of the economic and military factors of this country. In addition, Israel located in an area that is slightly arid and makes water limited. In fact, this is not a problem because of the Israeli salinity system which makes the country's natural water resources sufficient although on the other hand it should import food and oil. Given the excellent economic capability of the country to get the title of "very high developed", the import is certainly not a financial problem of the country. Moreover, the United States also provides a great deal of financial aid that became the reason for Israel's rapid progress.

The political leaders of Israel still consider Iran to be a security challenge for their country. However, with a focus that has shifted from Iran's previous nuclear issue, it is now become a regional problem (Kaye 2016). The policy that result in Iran's nuclear deal by the P5+1 countries only makes Iran's nuclear become legitimate because it does not make Iran abolish any nuclear elements owned by its country. This will certainly make Iran even more dangerous because the existing nuclear facilities and nuclear development sites in the country can be re-developed when the terms of the agreement are over. Israel has become threatened again and based on this vision or prediction, Israel then has this foreign policies that have the author analyze using national attributes level of analysis in this section.

## 4 CONCLUSION

From the various explanations the author has explained earlier, it can be analyzed that some of Israel's national attributes can be used to explain the state's behavior in foreign policy making. Looking back on the case, Iran and Israel see themselves as opposed to each side that has influence in the region (Kaye et al., 2011). Iran's regime sees Israel as a competitor since its country's revolution and on the other hand, Israel sees Iran as its biggest challenge and security threat in relation to contradictory ideologies of the two countries. Not only that, Israel, which initially only saw Iran as a nuclear weapons challenge, is now a regional problem so its foreign policy decisions tend to be coercive (Kaye 2016). In relation to the condition of the case, some of the most significant and prominent attributes of the author's view are the geography, demographic conditions, political systems, and military capabilities based on the explanations the author has described in the

previous section. Israel has a position and power that can be classified advanced and strong. So, in this case, the bargaining position can be considerably strategic despite being in the shadow of the threat of Iran's nuclear attack that wants the abolition of Jews from its existence in the world.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the author by using some elements of this national attribute in fact still has some weaknesses. This weakness is visible from the reality in international relations that can not be simplified or generalized. That happen because the dynamics of international relations itself. From the attributes the author has explained, it can be seen that the policy-making of a country is not only focused and sourced from the internal factors of the national attributes of the country, but there are external influences that able to make up the national attribute itself. In the case of Iran's nuclear deal, Israel has a lot of influence from the United States which also forms its foreign policy making. In addition, actors can also act beyond the calculations that have been made by the theoretical experts of the attributes of the national attributes.

This is assumptions supported by Hudson (2014) and Elman (1995) in their writings which states that small countries generally have little influence and tend to be weak in foreign policy making. This condition is not correlated with the case of Israel where, Israel is classified as a small country apart from its border issue with Palestine. However, due to its military capability as well as its well-established economy, Israel was able to secure its position in the constellation of international politics. Israel's policy making is also bold enough because of its coercive nature. Some of the weaknesses of this national attribute then make the author assume that generalization can not be done considering the characteristics possessed by each element and country must be different and also depends on the situation and conditions that take place.

Nevertheless, the use of this level of analysis has contributed in observing the country's behavior in determining the direction of their foreign policy. The policy makers control their decisions to achieve their national goals that are specifically set forth in the terminology of national interest. The author sees that the national power of the country, in this case is Israel, has a very big role in foreign policy making. Elements of the national attributes such as those which the authors have described before will apply only when interacting with other countries. Their presence is not only attached to the country owner, but also has interaction with other countries. Thus, the national attribute that becomes the national power of a country

can be considered in analyzing the foreign policy of a country.

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