

Donald Trump's Personality and the Future of Iranian Nuclear

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Abstract

Iran and P5+1 countries have successfully reached an agreement on nuclear development programs through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 14 July 2015. The agreement gives hope that tensions between Iran and the Western countries, especially US, would end in line with the signing of the agreement. However, when the US administration was taken over by Donald Trump, the hope was dashed when Trump refused to ratify the nuclear agreement on 13 October 2017. Trump considered that the JCPOA agreement to be the worst that involved US. Trump also claimed that Iran was a fanatical regime and made multiple violations of the agreement. Trump who is regarded as a populist and conservative always adopts a policy that conflicts with the views of the public. Consequently, the populist and conservative Trump's personality is seen to have played an important role in every policy adopted. Iran's nuclear future has become uncertain as Trump refused to ratify the nuclear agreement. Dispute between the two countries is likely to occur and the relationship would be more strained, similarly when Iran was under the administration of Ahmadinejad.

Key words: Trump, JCPOA, populist, conservative, Iranian nuclear

Introduction

Donald Trump's victory as the 45th President of US in the 2016 general elections shocked many. Many analysts expected Hillary Clinton to win. Various reactions emerged to voice concerns over the election results, including street demonstrations everywhere. In any case, US citizens were forced to accede to the new president elected by majority vote. The rise of Trump has been a worldwide concern since he carried out campaigns to abolish trade agreements, block influx of immigrants, and reject the issue of climate change and some other policies that contradict the will of the international community.

Now, Trump is in power. Some of the policies he proposed during his campaign have already been implemented including refusing to certify Iran's nuclear agreement reached under the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in 2015 and submitted his decision to the US Congress. Many analysts believe that Trump's election as US President would not bring much change to Iran. Following the election of Trump as US president, several issues related to the Islamic Republic of Iran arose. Among the questions that are the focus of this study are how is the Trump's personality could influence national policy and the direction of relations between Iran and US? and how is the future of Iranian nuclear?.

Literature Review

There are several studies that are thought to reflect US foreign policy on Iran's nuclear. Shalom (2016) in his study focused on US foreign policy on Iran's nuclear development during the Obama administration. President Obama has made it clear that he is determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. At the same time, Obama has always emphasized that he will try to use diplomatic and political ways as the primary approach. Küntzel (2014) in his study mentioned that the new US policy on Iranian nuclear under the Obama administration beginning November 24, 2013 is considered to weaken US influence. It was different when the US led by Bush, in which the US persuaded the UN Security Council to block Iran. Hassibi & Sauer (2013) argue that punishing by blocking Iran on nuclear issues is an inaccurate act. The best approach the US has to take is through diplomatic resolution, not the sanctions approach but the military approach. Rahman et.al (2018) argue that the US strategic interests in the Middle East in the context of Iran's nuclear is to control Persian Gulf oil resources, preventing wider Iran's influence in the Middle East, providing military protection to the Persian Gulf states as the largest oil producers in the Middle East and protecting Israel whom is a close US ally. When viewed from neorealism. They also argue that Iran's action under Ahmadinejad to continue its nuclear program is justified as it is a survival effort and to prevent external threats, though this will lead to nuclear competition in the region.

From the literatures above, there have been no studies on the US foreign policy during Trump Administration on the Iran nuclear deal. Therefore, this study attempts to complement the gaps in these studies.

Hypothesis Development

Rosenau explains that idiosyncrasy is one of the most important elements in influencing foreign policy. He defines idiosyncrasy as the leading policymaker responsible for introducing and implementing policies (Rosenau, 1976). This concept emphasizes the individual element as an important factor in the decision-making. Individuals in this decision can be seen in terms of their personalities, such as leadership style, character, use of advisors, and the process of obtaining information (Preston, 2006).

In the context of Donald Trump's personality and leadership style, politicians and analysts refer to other Trump populist acts, such as anti-free trade and anti-illegal immigrant as Trumpism (Seib, 2016) and Pippa Norris calls it authoritarian populism (Norris, 2016). Trump is also classified as conservative and takes the opposite path to Obama's policies (anti-Obama). Diego Pagliarulo called it Old School Conservatism (Pagliarulo, 2017). Either way, whatever his personality (ideology, character and style of leadership), Trump is certainly not a moderate. As we know, the ideology can influence people in making decisions. The ideology can influence a leader in determining its foreign policy (Danforth, 2008; Onuki, Ribeiro, and Oliveira, 2009; Bleau, 2014).

Trump's anti-free trade and anti-illegal immigrant policies, refusing to ratify Iran's nuclear agreement are among the actions that reflect his policies are influenced by his own personality. Despite IAEA stating that Iran still complies with the requirements of JCPOA 2015, Trump has his own stand. He accused Iran of "multiple violations of the agreement" (Collinson, Liptak, and Merica, 2017). This once again shows that Trump is a populist, taking action differently with most people or the views of others.

When it comes to being idiosyncratic in Trump's personality, it clearly shows that he is a stubborn, resolute person who does not care what others think, so that every policy he takes invites controversy. He was judged harshly and firmly even by the people around him. For example, many of his senior officials were fired or resigned because of disagreeing with Trump's policies. Among those resigning was Patrick Kennedy, a senior US State Officer resigning in January 2017. Sebastian Gorka, a senior White House National Security officer resigned in August 2017 for disagreeing with Trump's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan. Sean Spicer, the White House spokesman, resigned in July 2018. Andrew McCabe, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's deputy director, resigned in January 2018 as Trump accused him supporting Democrat Party. Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General resigned in March 2017 for engaging in a conflict with President Trump over the investigation mechanism against James Comey, the FBI's Director General. Last, Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State was fired by President Trump for insulting and conflicting with Trump

From those facts, we argue that the Trump's personality play important roles in determining the direction of the relationship between the US and Iran.

Methodology

In order to reach the objectives, this study has used descriptive-analytic method. This study has used secondary data which was collected through library resources such as books, journals, reports, and authoritative internet materials in connection with objectives of this study. In order to obtain those data, we conducted this study for a year, which was from September 2017 to August 2018.

Limitations

This study focuses on the character and personality of Donald Trump who is regarded to influence the US foreign policy especially related with Iran's nuclear program. Trump's personality is considered to have an impact on Iran's nuclear future. In terms of timeframe, this study is limited from 2016 to 2018 only. However, important factors beyond the timeframe related with this study will be considered as supplements.

Findings

Trump's anti-free trade policy, anti-foreigners, refusing to acknowledge Iran's nuclear deal are among the actions that reflected his policies are influenced by his personality, character and leadership style. Trump is regarded as a populist and conservative. Therefore, Trump's personality is seen to have played an important role in making foreign policy. Trump's personality is affecting the future of Iran's nuclear program. Iran's nuclear future has become uncertain and relationship the two countries would be more strained.

Result and Discussion

Iran-US Relations

The US and Iran have a long history of bilateral political relations. Officially, the relationship began in 1856. That was when Shah of Iran, Nasseredin Shah Qajar, sent his first ambassador Mirza Abolhasan Syirazi, to Washington DC. However, only starting in 1944, the two countries began opening embassies in their respective countries (Lesch, 2007). In the Cold War era, especially before the revolution, the relations between the two countries were well

established. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, had a very close bilateral relationship with the US, including the modernisation of Iran's economic policies, pro-Western external policies and frequent visits to the US. Shah regarded the United States as its most important ally at that time (Madjid, 2013).

The bilateral ties of both countries during the Cold War were formed due to existence of interests. The US interest in Iran was to offset the influence of Soviet Union (Chubin, 1974). The US has also assumed that Iran was one of the most influential countries in the Middle East at the time and has the potential to become the US ally at the Middle East. In addition, Iran was also a rich country in natural resources, particularly oil and gas, two resources needed by large industrialised countries like the US.

The US and Iran later established a cooperative relationship in the military field. It is not only served as a fortress to eradicate the influence of communism but also aimed to preserve the Dynasty of Shah of Iran (Puar, 1980). Since 1952, the US has provided USD1,135 billion worth of funds to Iran. Out of that amount, USD631 million was an economic aid, while USD504 million was for military assistance. All military aid was a gift (not debt), while the gift of economic aid was USD376 million. This meant that Iran owed the US only USD255 million in aid (Ansari, 2008).

The good relationship during the Cold War was utilised by Shah of Iran to seek support from the US to develop nuclear facilities. The US and its allies then supported the development of Iran's nuclear program with the assumption to adequately meet the supply of Iranian electricity and at the same time that the oil resources were not being exploited other than as a source to meet these electrical needs (Madjid, 2013). Starting from 1974, the US provided electricity and uranium-enriched supplies sufficient for 10 years of nuclear power (Ansari, 2008). At this point, the relations between the US and Iran were very close. Unfortunately, when a revolution broke out in Iran in 1979, relations between the two countries changed drastically. Iran no longer regarded the US as a partner. Iranian leaders considered the US as a parasite that spoils its country slowly. Hence, the Iranian-US relationship turned from friends to foes.

This revolution has an impact on bilateral relations between the two countries. The US, which has been disagreeing with the ongoing revolution in Iran, caused this good relationship to be threatened. Also during the revolution, Khomeini chanted slogans that defamed the US and Israel where the US was called Big Satan and Israel was Little Satan (Lowe and Spencer, 2006). The relations between the two countries became worst after the siege of the US embassy in Tehran by Iranian undergraduates who detained 53 US citizens at the embassy for 444 days. In the same year, the US embassy in Tehran was closed and the US citizens were deported. This became the turning point of hostilities and the breakup of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Iraq-Iran War between 1980 and August 1988 has further deteriorated Iran-US ties as the US took a stand to support Iraq in the war. Indirectly, the 1979 revolutionary events caused Iran to be sidelined by the US and the international community. After the end of the Cold War, relations between the two countries became increasingly strained because the US imposed economic sanctions on Iran in 1995 (Ansari, 2007). In 2002, Iran-US relations became worst when Bush introduced the concept of Axis of Evil, which categorised Iran as one of the countries that supported terrorism and developed mass destruction weapons (Retnachrista, 2007). The tense relationship persisted as the US urged Iran to end its nuclear development program. The US described Iran's nuclear development could potentially be used for weapons

and military purposes. Therefore, the US as a hegemonic state felt responsible for preventing such things from occurring as it threatened US and international security.

The tension between Iran and the US reached its peak when the US lobbied UNSC (United Nations Security Council) to issue a resolution on Iran's nuclear. Acting on the US lobby, UNSC imposed sanctions on Iran through Resolution Nos. 1696, 1737, 1747, 1803, and 1929. The content of resolutions are to require Iran to suspend all activities related to the enrichment and re-processing of nuclear programs, prohibit the supply of nuclear-related materials, freeze individual assets and key companies associated with the program, and Iran must provide co-operation with the IAEA for inspection of Iran's nuclear facilities. The UNSC also imposed a weapons ban to Iran and calls on other countries to monitor Iranian bank activity, inspect Iranian ships and aircraft, and monitor the movements of individuals involved in Iran's nuclear program. In addition, Iran is not permitted to acquire interests in any commercial activity in other countries involving uranium mining, production or use of nuclear materials and technology (United Nations, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1737/resolutions.shtml>). Iranian-US relations are beginning to improve when Iran is led by Rouhani who is deemed moderate. The relationship between the two countries is improving after Iran is ready to sign a nuclear agreement with P5+1 in 2015, known as JCPOA. However, when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States in January 2017, relations between the two countries were tense. It is backed by Trump's refusal to ratify a nuclear agreement that must be signed every three months. Iran's nuclear issue was the best chance for the US to eradicate Iran's growing influence in the Middle East. Therefore, the US has to pressure Iran to end its nuclear development program, because it could provide opportunity for Iran to create nuclear weapons. Thus, the US saw it as a matter that could threaten its hegemony in the Middle Eastern region.

Post Negotiations with P5+1

On 3 April 2015, a negotiation agreement on Iran's nuclear program was reached with P5+1 countries (United States of America, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France and German). In this negotiation, Iran agreed to reduce its uranium enrichment, but was allowed to develop nuclear for peaceful purposes. On 14 July 2015, Iran and P5+1 countries made a more comprehensive agreement on nuclear development programs or better known as JCPOA during the last negotiation held in Vienna. Following that, Iran would have no opportunity to create nuclear weapons. Iran was also willing to provide a more transparent route to IAEA to inspect Iran's nuclear facilities and reactors.

Iran's current stockpile of low-enriched uranium will be reduced by 98 percent, from 10,000 kg to 300 kg. This reduction will be maintained for fifteen years (NPR July 14, 2015). For the same fifteen-year period, Iran will be limited to enriching uranium to 3.67%, a percentage sufficient for civilian [nuclear power](#) and research, but not for building a [nuclear weapon](#) (Bradner, 2015). In this deal there are exemptions that benefit Iran. That exemptions were granted to Iran prior to 16 January 2016. The exemptions included: (a) Iran able to exceed the 300 Kg of 3.5% LEU limit in the agreement; (b) Iran able to exceed the zero Kg of 20% LEU limit in the agreement; (c) Iran to keep operating 19 "hot cells" that exceed the size limit in the agreement; (d) Iran to maintain control of 50 tonnes of heavy water that exceed the 130 tonne limit in the agreement by storing the excess at an Iran-controlled facility in Oman (Landay, 2016).

Once the agreement was reached, UNSC agreed to lift the sanctions against Iran after receiving a report from IAEA confirming that Iran has reduced its enrichment uranium. Lifted sanctions related to economy. Weapons restrictions were lifted after five years and missile

restrictions after eight years. This agreement is a long history of Iran after years of being restricted by US, Europe, and UNSC. Nevertheless, this negotiation agreement was greatly opposed by Israel and the US Congress (VOA Indonesia, 2015). Now, Iran and the P5+1 countries have reached a consensus. The sanctions on Iran have also been withdrawn gradually. This means that the conflicts and disputes between Iran and US and European countries have come to an end. At this point Iran and US relations can be regarded as friends even though they are not as close during Shah's period. Many are hoping that tension between Iran and the West would end in line with the signing of Iran's nuclear agreement with P5+1 on 14 July 2015. It was followed by the gradual abolition of Iranian sanctions and IAEA was allowed to enter all nuclear facilities without any hindrance. However, when Trump took over US administration, a relatively good relationship during Rouhani and Obama era turned out otherwise. Trump's administration has ruined it and such hope was dashed.

Trump's Policy on Iranian Nuclear Development

Since 15 years ago, US has been facing serious economic uncertainties. Many of these economic problems are due to US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, whereby the White House spent substantially to finance the war in both countries. In addition, American societies also face sharp economic and social gaps that would affect social relations among members of society. Therefore, they have great expectations for the new president to realise their hopes of getting out of the economic and social gaps. Trump understood the situation in the US communities and promised to deliver what the people wanted through the slogan in his campaign, "Make America Great Again". People warmly welcomed this slogan and hoped Trump would bring US societies into a better future.

Trump focused on foreign policies suitable to US interests, in line with his campaign slogan aimed at making US respected at international political stage again. Trump states that he would apply "America First" in its foreign policies (Beckwith, 2016). "America First" as defined by Trump refers to security and interests of US citizens are prioritised in every foreign policy (Milbank, 2016). Use of nuclear weapons in any form, especially being misused for the purpose of violence is not compromised. Unfortunately, Trump surprisingly gave a statement to let Japan and South Korea develop their nuclear power (Kleiner, 2016). More surprising is that on 13 October 2017, Trump refused to ratify the Iranian nuclear agreement, something that the president needed to do every three months. He stated: "The Iranian deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into" (White House, 2017).

Trump then took steps to let Congress decide whether to impose new sanctions. Congress has two months to decide. Trump says that if Congress fails to agree on tighter conditions against Iran then he would withdraw from the deal completely. This led to reaction of world leaders and opposition, especially European countries that signed the JCPOA agreement. However, the deadline has ended on December 2017. A decision on US's continued participation in the Iran nuclear deal could be back in Trump's hands, as the US Congress appears unable to gather support to amend an existing oversight law, as he has demanded (George, 2017). On May 8, 2018, Trump finally announced that the US withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal. Although Trump's actions are regretted by the P5 + 1 member states, Trump did not care and endures with his decision (Sabur, 2018). This shows that Trump's personality is conservative even though his allies are disappointed with such actions, but for his purpose, Trump faced the challenge.

On 12 January 2018, Trump decided to continue to waive economic sanctions related to the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, leaving the deal intact for now, but issued new sanctions

against 14 people and entities involved with the country's ballistic missile programs and a crackdown on government protesters (Wadhams, 2018). He has also delivered an ultimatum to US's European allies to fix the "terrible flaws" in the Iran nuclear deal, or he will pull the US out in a few months' time (Lee, 2018).

Trump was considered as a conservative, populist and controversial individual. Trump brought US out of the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) agreement on 23 January 2017 (Bradner, 2017). Trump also announced that US would leave UNESCO with effect from December 2018 (Vabulas, 2017). Prior to that, Trump announced people from six Muslim countries were banned from entering the US, namely Iran, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Sudan and Somalia via Executive Order 13769 or better known as Muslim ban or Travel ban (Dewan and Smith, 2017). All these facts show that Trump is a populist. He is different from Obama who was more moderate and diplomatic.

Trump's refusal to ratify Iran's nuclear agreements has made Iran's leaders dissatisfied. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says: "Trump's stupidity should not distract us from America's deceitfulness If the U.S. tears up the deal, we will shred it.... Everyone should know that once again America will receive a slap in its mouth and will be defeated by Iranians". Earlier, General Mohammad Ali Jafari, Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, threatened to attack US interests in the Middle East by using a missile that could reach a target of 2,000 km if it imposes new sanctions on Iran (VOA Indonesia, 2017).

The Future of Iranian Nuclear

After Donald Trump came to power in US, attempts to ruin the JCPOA were not subtle. Trump said JCPOA is one of the worst treaties ever signed by US. However, many say the Iran Nuclear deal is working as Bill Foster, Congressman of Illinois, says that: "the Iran Nuclear Deal fulfilled its mission successfully" (Foster, 2017). Trump might be disappointed that Iran did not withdraw from this agreement, while at the same time US should lift the sanctions on Iran. Iran's compliance with the JCPOA agreement brought a positive image on the country. Iran's nuclear agreement in JCPOA is an internationally accredited UN agreement. Therefore, Trump could not unilaterally withdraw from this agreement as it would cast a bad image on US.

The international community would consider US as a traitor to the agreement for violating it as US has signed it. However, Trump may not care about the views of the international community as he is a conservative president and simultaneously controversial. Therefore, we think that for the next few years Iran's nuclear issue is expected to get more intense in line with Trump's refusal to ratify Iran's nuclear agreement. It would be an interesting issue debated by analysts as the dispute would again take place between the US and Iran just as it did when Iran was under Ahmadinejad.

The future of Iran's nuclear development program depends on the personality of its leader. Perhaps one day US and Iran relations would improve when both countries are led by moderate and reformed presidents for a prolonged period.

Conclusion

The US and Iran have a long history of bilateral political relations. In the Cold War era, especially before the revolution, the relations between the two countries were well established. However, when a revolution broke out in Iran in 1979, relations between the two countries changed drastically. At this time, Iran regarded the US as an enemy and continued until

Ahmadinejad presidency. However, after Rouhani took over power and signed a nuclear treaty agreement with P5+1 countries, Iran-US relations were deemed to improve and has the potential to become partners like before. It is due to Rouhani, as a moderate, was seen to warm up to US, especially when US under Obama's Administration. Unfortunately, when Trump took over US administration, a relatively good relationship during Rouhani and Obama era turned out otherwise due to Trump, who is regarded as a populist and conservative, refused to ratify the nuclear agreement. Therefore, Trump's personality is seen to have played an important role in making foreign policy. Iran's nuclear future has become uncertain and relationship the two countries would be more strained.

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