

THE FAILURE OF OBAMA-NETANYAHU'S TWO-STATE SOLUTION 2009-2016 IN THE LIGHT OF WALTZ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the longest conflicts in the world. Since World War II, the United States has always been the main mediator in this conflict. Although the United States had always played a major role in bringing both parties into the negotiating table, it was rather odd during Barack Hussein Obama's administration (2009-2016). The peace negotiation was rather slow. In fact, it remained stagnant during most of Obama's administration as opposed to his predecessors. One of the main reasons was due to Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu's tense relationship. The main objective of this paper is to identify and assess the factors that influenced both individuals' leadership that resulted in the failure of the Two-State solution. To answer this, the study employs the level of analysis concept propounded by Kenneth N. Waltz (1959, 2001). According to Waltz, this level of analysis includes three images of the international system. They are systemic level, nation-state level and individual level (individual decision). Combined, these levels can exert a strong influence on the leaders' decision making and behaviour. This study found aggressive characters of both leaders, different interpretations on the Two-State solution (individual level), pressure coming from the domestic level (nation-state level) and the Iranian nuclear programme issue (systemic level) had affected the relationship of both leaders.

Keywords: *Israel-Palestine conflict, Obama, Netanyahu, peace negotiations*

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INTRODUCTION

Defining the nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict or at larger context known as the 'Arab-Israeli Conflict' varies from one scholar to another. For instance, Simon-Tov (1994: 81) classifies the Israel-Palestine conflict "as protracted conflict in which the risk is too high, has been happening for a very long time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare and most importantly, the nature of the conflict is seen as unchanged and unresolvable". For Bickerton and Klausner (1991: 3), this conflict has a variety of elements that include, among others, religious war between the followers of Islam and Judaism over the shared worshipping and heritage places, an ethnic war between traditional rival groups, a war of

territorial expansion, a war of self-defence between a newly established state that defending itself from its neighbours, a war of national liberation in which rival militant nationalism are trying to establish their place and an imperial war between imperial states of Europe, geopolitical rivalry between the United States (US) and the former Soviet Union (now Russia). As much as this conflict involves many other elements that are non-religious, religion has been and continues to be a vital point for the people involved in the conflict as it shapes the attitudes of protagonists' parties involved toward each other (Bickerton and Klausner, 1991: 5).

Insofar, Israel and Palestine have had a total of three big wars, namely: (i) Arab-Israeli War I (1948), (ii) Arab-Israeli War II (1967)¹ and, (iii) Yom Kippur War (1973). After the end of World War II in 1945, the US has replaced Great Britain as the world hegemonic power (Asmady, 2000), and it has been involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict as a peace broker since 1978 when Carter invited the leaders and their delegations to meet with him and his foreign policy team at Camp David to produce the first peace treaty ever between Israel and Arab state (Eisenberg, 2013: 87). Interestingly, the US was also the first country to acknowledge the establishment of Israel in 1948 during the Presidency of Harry S. Truman (Ousdal, 2013: 210). Based on the US active involvement, this indirectly indicates that the US and Israel had always had some sort of special relationship since the early stage of the Israel establishment.

The involvement of US in the Israel-Palestine conflicts has witnessed a series of peace negotiations initiated. The US has proposed that the basis of any peace negotiation should be on the 'Two-State Solution' which means, there will be two separate states of Israel and Palestine, co-existing side by side on the land between the Western Bank of the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Herwood, 2016). There were several major peace negotiations which the US had brokered including the Camp David Treaty 1978 (President Jimmy Carter era), Oslo I in 1993, Oslo II in 1995, and Israel-Jordan Treaty 1994 (President Bill Clinton era) and Road Map 2002 (President George W. Bush era). Even though the US has played its active role in these peace negotiations, none of them had produced or led to any final resolution.

In spite of the US strong support for Israel, the two have had their fair shares of love-hate relationship. There have been a series of disagreements between both sides in dealing with Israel-Palestine issues. Perhaps, it was during Barack Obama's administration that the US had the most intense relationship with Israel. There was no peace deal signed between Israel and Palestine during Obama's administration. The two-state solution peace process is rather an untenable proposition for both countries.

As a matter of fact, peace negotiation during Obama's administration went from bad to worse when there was a series of disagreements between Obama himself and Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu. Undeniably, other factors could also contribute to hamper the peace negotiation but, this study believes that the sour relationship between Obama and Netanyahu seems to be prevail than the other factors. This bitter relationship between both leaders might be influenced by a number of underlying factors. Therefore, by applying the level of analysis concept, this study seeks to discuss and find out the reasons behind those bitter relationships which, up to an extent, caused the failure of the Two-State solution during Barack Obama's administration (2009-2016). The Two-State solution is a partition proposal for Palestine lands initially recommended by the Peel Commission during the British Mandate (1922-1947) to end the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. This partition proposal was brought to the United Nations (UN) in 1947 which required all member states to vote. The result of the vote sanctioned the UN Resolution 181 which was in favour of the partition of Palestine into two states, namely Arab and Jewish states. Nevertheless, Resolution 181 failed to resolve the conflict. Worse, a series of wars erupted between Arabs and Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973. The situation gradually

¹ Also known as 6 Days War.

began to change in the 1980s when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) representing the Palestinians opted for the Two-State solution, culminating in the signing of US-sponsored peace treaties between PLO and Israel; (1) the Oslo Treaty 1993 and (2) Road Map 2003. Essentially, these treaties affirm the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side peacefully with that of the Jewish. Upon the signing of these two treaties, the issue now is not whether a Palestinian state would be created, but when and in exactly what territory (Karmi, 2011). The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, otherwise known as OIC, had also been in favour of the Two-State solution (Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

In order to explain the variables or factors that influenced both Obama and Netanyahu behaviours in the Two-State solution, this study will employ Kenneth Waltz level of analysis as the theoretical framework. The Level of analysis was first introduced by Waltz back in 1959 in his book called *Man, the State, and War* in which he identifies that there are three images on how to study wars (Waltz, 1959, 2001). Waltz's three images begin with the first image (first level of analysis) that looks into human behaviour while the second image (second level of analysis) is related to the internal structure of states and the third image (third level of analysis) is about the international anarchy or the constraints of the international system (Waltz, 1959: Chapter 2, 4 & 6; Tamaki, 2015: 3). This study employed Waltz's three levels of analysis since it best suited its objective i.e. to analyse the leadership characters of both leaders in negotiating the Two-State solution. Not only both Obama and Netanyahu had different styles of leadership, they also faced various issues and challenges both in domestic and international levels. That said, Waltz's three levels of analysis provides a comprehensive analysis from individual, domestic and systemic (international) levels. As such, it was used to help analyse the leadership characters of Obama and Netanyahu, their domestic pressures as well as systemic (international) threats or challenges that influenced the negotiating process of the Two-State solution.

As Waltz uses the framework as a tool for him study wars, the framework itself is deemed to be appropriately useful as it can be utilised to study the cause of why certain events, decision making, treaties and alliances take place. Jackson and Sorenson (2013: 257) use the framework to study foreign policy by breaking it into those three images which make their analysis to be simplified and easy to understand. Tamaki (2015: 2-3) follows Waltz three images as a tool for him to analyse international politics and international events as he explains "we divide the complex reality of international politics into smaller chunks - or 'levels' - so that studying it becomes easier, enabling us to determine what decisions are made by whom, and under what constraints". Therefore, this study attempts to use the same framework as it is seen as the most suitable concept to be used for this study. By breaking these images into three big parts, the analysis is made easier with a more concrete explanation provided by each level of analysis depending on which levels suits it. The following section will be about those three images explained by Waltz. Explanation for the following section will then provide an early understanding to Obama and Netanyahu behaviours in the Two-State solution in the later part of the paper.

The Individual Level

In Waltz (2001: 16) first level of analysis he explains that, "the important causes of war are found in the nature and behaviour of man". Wars erupt due to the selfishness, misdirected

aggressive impulses and the stupidity of a man and that other causes are secondary and have to be explained in the context of these factors. Therefore, this indicates that the first level of analysis explains that international politics and international events are mainly driven by the actions of individuals or the outcomes of human's psychological forces. According to Jackson and Sorenson (2013: 257), individual as a decision maker in the first level of analysis can be related to his or her way of thinking, basic beliefs and personal priorities. Since the first level of analysis is mainly focusing on humans, therefore, their personality and behaviour will determine what decision they will make. Thus, there are specific personality traits on individuals that can affect certain patterns of outcomes in international relations.

Many writings in International Relations from Confucius to present-day pacifists have mentioned that if war happens primarily due to the nature of a man, then the key to prevent war from keep happening is to enlighten individuals or securing their psychio-social re-adjustment (Waltz, 2001: 16). To explain this, Waltz has gathered first-image thinkers that has the same idea that the primary reasons for war is due to the human nature. However, not every first-image thinker agree on what human nature is, which then divides all the thinkers into two camps, namely the pessimists and the optimists. As Waltz mentions "everyone of course, thinks his own theories realistic" (Waltz, 2001: 20). The pessimist and optimist both think that they have the correct view on man.

Reality is flawed is the ideology of pessimism (Waltz, 2001: 18). The pessimists believe that, war is not just rooted from the heart, mind or psyche of human beast but most importantly, those roots cannot be eradicated or modified; they accept man's fixed and persistent capacity for evil; they often look domestic and national violence as the humans-products that are unavoidable and humans mitigated only by the fear of overwhelming coercive authority (Singer, 1960: 454). The optimists on the other hand, believe that reality is good and society is essentially harmonious (Waltz, 2001: 19). They believe that there are chances for humans to turn from evil into good through education and thus, will lead to the elimination of war. However, both agree on the causes of war i.e. due to the human nature though they differ on the cure.

As Waltz explains first level of analysis (the nature of human beings) through the views of the first-image thinkers (the pessimist and the optimists), this study will now look into those characteristics. Firstly, human beings are born with a finite degree that has infinite aspirations. As Waltz (2001: 21) mentions "...a pigmy who thinks himself a giant". Secondly, because of man self-interest, he develops economic and political ideologies and seek to pass them on as universal systems; he is born and raised in insecurity and attempts to fully secure himself; and that he is a man but consider himself as a god. Thirdly, man however is not led by the principles of pure reason but by his passions. As a result, man is drawn into conflict. Fifthly, man does not have the manner to mutually be helpful instead he collectively destructs each other. Man however, always competes to be the first among men and then pride himself with the harm he has done to others rather than the good he has done himself. As Waltz quotes from Morgenthau "...the ubiquity of evil in human action" arising from man's ineradicable lust for power..." (Waltz, 2001: 21-24).

As Waltz explains the first level of analysis that centres around human's nature and behaviour, Byman and Pollack (2001: 114 & 137-139) reiterate that, "individuals play a central role in shaping international relations, including the causes of war, alliance patterns, and other areas that international relations scholars consider important". They however offer four hypotheses of how certain individuals or leaders' personality traits can affect certain patterns of outcomes in international relations. Firstly, states led by risk-tolerant leaders are more likely to cause wars. There are leaders that are prepared to take a risk even though they know that chances to win might be low. Leaders of this type of character are perceived as aggressive and usually will end up causing his country to be involve in a war.

There are, however, two types of leaders' personality traits according to Hermann (1980: 11) and this includes traits of an aggressive leader and traits of a cooperative leader. Hermann characterises traits of aggressive leaders as the need to take over upon others, little ability to consider solutions, sceptical of others and willing to take actions. Cooperative leaders on the other sides, seek to maintain good relations, considerate persons when it comes to alternatives, are not suspicious of others and have little interests in launching actions.

Secondly, states led by delusional leaders start wars and prolong them unnecessarily. Delusional leaders often miscalculate balances of power, misinterpret or ignore systemic imperatives and domestic constraints, causing them to overestimate their chances to win in a war or to underestimate the value of alliance. They also often imagine threats that do not exist. These individuals often associate themselves with a security dilemma. Even though some can argue that it was because of the state of anarchy that compels state leaders to be in a state of fear against other states, but sometimes, anarchy is not the sole reason. A delusional leader can create his own anarchy conditions through his own actions (Byman & Pollack, 2001:138). It is how they evaluate options, choosing among alternatives and implement their decisions. Decision maker, however, does not live in a perfect world. Leaders make the best possible choice that they can, but mistakes often occur when actors incorrectly evaluate the situations. However, miscalculations and mistakes usually are not because of the lack of information but it was due to the leader's own self-deception.

Thirdly, states led by leaders with grandiose visions are more likely to destabilise the system. These leaders are not pleased with what they currently have and they lust for more power in the international system. They could not compromise when dealing with issues and therefore, often attempt to make desperate actions in order to get immediate results for their own ambitions (Byman & Pollack, 2001:138).

Fourthly, states led by predictable leaders will have a stronger and more enduring alliances. Those leaders whose actions and behaviours can be predicted could create a degree of trust among other state leaders rather than those leaders often like to surprise or making a sudden move against each other. States, however, may make up alliances with states whose behaviour they do not trust, but these ties are unlikely to stay for a long time. According to Morgenthau (1960: 201), the smoothness and effectiveness of alliances depend on how good the degree of trust and respect is among military statesmen. This degree of trust is created by the leader himself and therefore, if that particular leader fails to show he is worthy of trusting of, alliances will be less likely to work.

The Domestic Level

According to Alt (2017), if one sees only from the international system (systemic level), one will only understand part of the international relations. Therefore, this level of analysis seeks to explain why states make a decision or behave in certain ways from the domestic level analysis. This includes examining state characteristics, organisational or bureaucratic, interest groups, the military-industrial complex, public opinion and legislature.

State characteristics can be different. One asks, is a state democratic or authoritarian? What are the economic structures of that states? Or what is the nature of the states (strong versus weak states)? For example, during Cold War, it was not just about the intense relationship between two superpowers (US versus Soviet Union) but, it was a war between democracy versus communism. The same goes for economics systems whereby, it was a rivalry between a capitalist type of economy versus the communist type of economy (Alt, 2017). Furthermore, the domestic level of analysis could

also explain that the US intervention in Iraq was due to, among others, its cultural belief that its political and economic system is superior to other systems. In short, characteristics of states actually determine its external policy.

Next, bureaucracies or organisational structures involve how organisations or ministry in that state functions guide its foreign policy behaviour. Diplomat, ambassador or foreign minister usually conducts states foreign policy. They act as the negotiator to secure states national interest and they provide a huge amount of information in making foreign policies. However, tension sometimes can be erupted between state leaders and diplomats. Diplomats can attempt to control the information that they receive. Yet, bureaucratic agencies can sometimes be troublesome because this official representative may not owe their loyalty to the political leaders (*Foreign Policy*, 2017: 136).

Bureaucracies also involve interagency relationships. For example, in the US, they have the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), US State Department and military agency. These are some expert and skilful agencies that can put pressure on the government. Since professional bureaucrats constitute people who are expert in their profession, they can create an asymmetrical power and dependence relationship between them and the elected officials (Ibid). Bureaucracies are driven by the agency because they need to make sure the survival of their positions and interest (Kozak & Keagel, 1988: 3-15). When the government implement certain policies or actions which are not in line with the agencies interest, there will be a high tendency that they will pressure the government to change it.

Interest groups pressure, on the other hand, involves societal lobbying in the foreign policy. It comprises an association of individuals or organisations that share one or more common concerns (Thomas, 2017). Interest groups aims are, among other things, to direct the states foreign policy for the benefits of their group members or society. For example, in the European Community, French farmers exert political pressure on the French governments through political associations and organisations. These group of farmers have a big post in international conferences, mainly in the European Community (which subsidies agriculture) and world trade talks (which set agricultural tariffs). In addition to that, interest groups can sometimes even prompt the government to take illegal actions on certain issues (*Foreign Policy*, 2017: 138).

The third factor is the military-industrial complex. It comprises a massive interlocking network of government agencies, industrial corporations and research institutes. The importance of military technology development has created interdependence relationships between the state government and the military-industrial complex. Their influences might extend to the level that it, could erode democracy system. How do they erode the system? This can be seen in the US military industries. Military industries will help a national politician to win his or her campaign election provided, that the politicians vote for military budgets in their campaign. There has been alleged bribery of the Pentagon officials as well. Clearly, these actions demolish the democratic principles such as equality, protections of the law, protections against powerful centred governments and protection of institutions. This is how powerful the military-industries can be in pressuring national politicians (*Foreign Policy*, 2017: 139-141).

As far as public opinion is concerned, apparently, it can exert pressure for the government to behave in certain ways. A government who rules without the legitimacy of its people will only disrupt the stability of the state. When wars happen for too long and contribute to a massive calamity and death, societies would feel felt that there is a need to change the government structures and the state's foreign policy, among others. This can be seen in the 2006 US Presidential Election whereby President Bush popularity was declining and eventually, voters (the public) voted his party out of the Congress. Moreover, in 2008 elections, his party (The Republicans) had also lost control of the Senate, House and Presidency and this was all due to the public opinions concern regarding the war in Iraq. In addition to that, the government can sometimes manipulate

and use public opinions for their own benefits. Governments tend to spend huge efforts on propaganda to win support for foreign policies. They usually use the media influences to capture the public opinions votes. By publicizing certain issues and defining them as a threat, the public will eventually believe it and thus will contribute to voting for that certain policy to be implemented by the government (*Foreign Policy*, 2017: 141).

Finally, the legislature (otherwise known as the Congress and Parliament). Congress (Presidential System) plays a direct role in making the decision for the state to behave. In the US, Congress possesses the power to determine whether or not the US could intervene (by military means) in any war (Asmady, 2000: 124). If the president initially declares a war against a country, and the Congress does not authorise this action, they can revoke the President declaration. For example, in 1973, the Congress had ratified an act called 'The War Power Act' just to contain the veto power of President Richard Nixon.

In the Parliamentary system such as Great Britain, the Executives (Prime Ministers) do not need to submit policies for formal approval from the legislature. Parliament is not compulsory to vote in international agreements, but it must authorise any change to British laws that such agreements entail (*Foreign Policy*, 2017:146). Moreover, most of the Parliamentary System shows that, if a policy implemented causes controversy, parties that do not constitute the majority in the legislature can seek to call for elections (meaning the country will vote again to ensure which parties will hold seats in the legislature).

Systemic Level

This level of analysis explains and examines the behaviour of a state by looking at the international system. The conditions in the international system are more powerful than the states and thus, the states could not resist these conditions and they are obliged to follow the rules set by the structure (Waltz, 1959; Jackson & Sorenson, 2013: 257). The systemic level also indicates that the international system is the cause of everything that was or is currently happening while the state behaviour is the effect of the cause. To discuss the systemic level, it must be discussed from the basis of International Relations theories mainly the Realism, Liberalism and the Social Constructivism. These theories actually shape or explain what is happening in the international system that compels states to behave in certain ways than the others.

The conditions in the international system have always been a big issue for the three mainstream of IRs theories as each theory has a different view on the conditions of the international system. Let's start with the Realist view first. The Realist has always been focusing on the anarchy concept that the international system has always been in a state of chaotic because there is no world government that can govern and maintain world order. No states can put other states inside a prison, much less to punish them. Since Realist believes that the international system is in an anarchic state, therefore, competition for power and security between states are the most vital factors for them to survive (Jackson & Sorenson, 2013: 257). Only through power and security that a state can continue to dominate and preserve its status in the international system.

For structuralist or neorealist, state behaviour is about structural distribution of power and capabilities. Structuralists will ask, who has more power? Are they (states) collaborating or competing? What is the pattern of interactions between the big powers? What kind of relationships do they have? Or how many big powers are there? For example, the US keeps on preserving its status quo, continuously exercising policies that demonstrate the military power and secure the spheres of influence in the international system so that they can continue to be the hegemon and that they can keep on to dominate others. Those whose suffer are mainly the weaker states that they do not have a

choice but have to abide by the rules and games set by the one who possesses more power or influence in the international system.

Moving on to the Liberals perspectives, the state of anarchy in the international system is always about the chaotic state. That said, there are always ways to handle the absence of international police. Liberalist believes that states can find more room for cooperation because of the international institutions and a common desire by states to progress and prosperity (Jackson & Sorenson, 2013: 257). International system is not always an arena for competition but also for cooperation because of the expected mutual benefits. The world, according to Liberalists, are interconnected and interdependent. Each of the states in the international system is dependent on the financial, global trade and technological advances that they are mostly pressured not to act in certain ways that will destruct or violate others. In addition to that, the world is filled with institutions and international law that can maintain peace and also directs the decisions and behaviours of every state to not create a war against each other.

Social Constructivist, however, sees that the goals of states are not decided beforehand and they are shaped by the ideas and values that come forward in the process of discourse and the interaction between states (Jackson & Sorenson, 2013: 257). If Realist and Liberalist see material or tangible things (military, alliances, alignments, economy, etc.), Social Constructivist sees the intangible things (values, identities and norms) that exist though people cannot see them. It is a product of social constructions in which our interactions give meaning to the substance. These norms are the shared expectations about appropriate behaviour that comes from a combination of beliefs and standard behaviour or international conventions. It is how the international community comes together and agrees on the common values and norms which shapes their goals and motives.

According to Finnemore (2009: 60-76), there are three social mechanisms that can serve to check, limit and shape a unipolar power. Firstly, those social mechanisms include how the international norms and laws can verify whether or not the unipolar behaviour is legitimate or not. She also mentions that in order for the unipolar power to create a legitimacy over its actions, other states must also recognise its actions. A unipolar power can use its power without regard to legitimacy but when its actions are too offensive, other states will not legitimize those behaviours. Secondly, institutions can become the tools for the unipolar power to create international rational-legal authorities, rules and laws and shaping them to its own preferences. Finnemore even argues that institutions can act as the instrument for unipolar power legitimation. The third one is hypocrisy. When a unipolar power feels constrained by the rules and norms that it creates, it will violate them while proclaiming that they abide by the rule and norms.

By looking at three main theories of IRs, it depends on the conditions in which the states are leaning towards to. All of these theories talk about the conditions in the international system (third level of analysis). They only differ in terms of their ideas and how they look at the conditions. This then results in why certain countries act in certain ways. As an instance, if the US Pivot of Asia strategy is a way to contain China due to the competitions of powers and distribution of powers in Southeast Asia region, it is, therefore, a pressure coming from the international system that compels the US to increase its presence and involvement in the region. This explains the systemic pressure coming from the perspectives of a Realist.

Similarly, China's behaviour on the South China Sea during the 90's can also be described as a pressure coming from the systemic level through the lens of Social Constructivist. China's behaviour during those times was not to attain its relative power but it was more driven by the ideational factors (social constructivist) that it had pushed for multilateralism norm in terms of security cooperation because China was trying to be "a good neighbour". During those times, China did not want to be the power that created a sense of threat to its neighbour or region which was mostly agreed by the global society.

Therefore, China tried to create legitimation over its action by engaging in multilateralism even though it was itself reluctant to do so. For example, in 1997, China agreed and was convinced to accept ASEAN-China proposal to talk about the South China Sea issue. Although there could be many theories in IRs that could explain the systemic pressure that pushes states to behave in certain ways, again it depends on the conditions of the international system. The conditions can be due, to the distribution of power, cooperation or due to the shared belief of norms and values of global society.

UNDERLYING FACTORS IN OBAMA-NETANYAHU SOUR RELATIONS

As aforementioned, this study argues that the bitter relations between Obama and Netanyahu seem to be the most significant factor for the slow or stagnant peace negotiations in the Israel-Palestine conflict, especially on the Two-State solution. There are a few underlying factors that contribute to the dynamics of both leaders' behaviour or leadership in the Two-State solution and this part of the study will discuss and explain the reasons behind the sour relations. In addition to that, this section will also attempt to deliberate the factors that contribute to the sour relations between both leaders from the Level of Analysis framework. Before embarking further on the analysis of different character and interpretation of Obama and Netanyahu towards the Two-State solution, it is only proper that this study examines briefly the political traits and thoughts of Obama and Netanyahu, which may directly and indirectly contribute to their differences on the issue of the Two-State solution and more importantly, Netanyahu's preference for the Republican's party than the Democrats'.

In principle, Obama and Netanyahu both came from two diverging political groups. Obama was a left-liberal democrat while Netanyahu came from a right-wing conservative (Gilboa, 2013: 20). Coming from the democrats' party, Obama's philosophy of politics was in line with the one from democratic viewpoints. According to Peters (2009: 125),

Obama's political philosophy is based on a moral vision informed by his own religious beliefs as a practising Christian, his experience as a community organizer, his understanding of the law, and a set of democratic ideals enshrined in the best traditions of American political life and exemplified in the speeches of Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Kennedy – three presidents to whom he refers constantly.

Besides, his political philosophy also treasures the notions of unity, community, equality and hope (Peters, 2009:126). As far as the US foreign policy was concerned, Obama wanted to see America moving away from militant unilateralism and return to the traditional multilateralism in international affairs that had steered the nation through the first decade following the end of the Cold War. Obama also favored more diplomatic engagements with the Muslim world and even-handed policy on the Israel-Palestine negotiation process (Gerges, 2013).

Meanwhile, Netanyahu as a political descendant of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (Drake, 1996), together with his Likud Party was more into the Realist philosophy with the main agenda of prioritizing the security of Israel. According to Navot and Rubin (2015), Netanyahu was a leader with a Hobbesian philosophy. Netanyahu, like Hobbes, identified his political agenda with firstly the national preservation especially with security which then explained Israel's behaviour in terms of preservation of the Zionist project (Navot & Rubin, 2015: 632). He also considered the Arab-Israel conflict as a perpetual fact of life that could be managed but would never be resolved (Benn, 2016). With security as the primary concern for Israel, Obama's political viewpoints in approaching the Israel-Palestine issue appeared to be in direct contrast with Netanyahu's.

Besides, Netanyahu had had a long-standing dispute with the democratic presidents since the mid 90's. When Netanyahu first won the election campaign in 1996, President Bill Clinton (a democrat) had openly campaigned against him by inviting incumbent Prime Minister Shimon Peres to visit the White House just before the vote (Beauchamp, 2016). When Netanyahu took the administration for the second time in 2009 after his defeat in 1999, he had a clash with President Obama, and it was over the same issue as Clinton i.e. the peace process of Israel-Palestine conflict although Iranian nuclear issue was also part of it. Thus, there was a constant tension between Netanyahu and the US presidents coming from the Democrats.

On the other side, since the issue of security had been the primary concern for Netanyahu, his government seemed to have favoured the Republicans than the Democrats albeit in every US election campaign Netanyahu tried to be bipartisan and remained outside the divisions between the Republican and Democratic parties (Yadlin, 2016). This is mainly because Israel would be put under less pressure when it comes to comprehensive peace talk and the Republicans are usually more likely to pursue an offensive strategy to Israel's enemies in the region like Iran. Apparently, the characters of both parties are different when it comes to supporting Israel. That said, it does not mean that the Democrats does not sympathize the Israelis but, the percentage of sympathizing over Israel than the Palestinian has always been smaller than the Republicans'. As an instance, in 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016 (Obama era), the percentage of Republicans who sympathized with the Israelis was 85%, 78%, 83% and 79%. On the same years, the Democratic party's percentage was only 48%, 55%, 49% and 53% (Saad, 2016). Unlike the Democrats, the Republicans are more likely to give overwhelming support for Israel; see Israel's enemies as America's enemies, and see a Palestinian state as less important than Israel's security from terrorism (Beauchamp, 2016). In addition to that, Netanyahu found comfort with the Republicans who would give a greater attention to Israel's security perseverance. On the contrary, the Democrats preferred to take a more measured view that diverged from Netanyahu Likud's party especially on the Iranian nuclear deal as well as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Accordingly, the alliance was much more likely to happen between Netanyahu and the Republicans than the Democrats.

Aggressive Characters by Both Leaders

Aggressive traits by both leaders are one of the indicators that could explain reasons behind both Obama and Netanyahu disagreement on the Two-State solution. Previously, in the level of analysis section (Individual level of analysis), Byman and Pollack (2001) have mentioned that states led by risk-tolerant leaders are more likely to cause wars. Though both Obama and Netanyahu arguments did not result into any war between both nations, they have clearly shown the traits of aggressive leaders that eventually worsen the potential of the Two-State solution. Obama wanted Israel to stop all of its settlements including the settlements within Israel national security barriers and return to the pre-1967 borders (Abrahams, 2016). Note that the US has always had a very strong relationship with Israel since President Harry S. Truman recognised the establishment of Israel in 1948. Furthermore, this was the first time a US President had a series of big quarrel or disagreement with Israel in the form of Barack Obama.

During Obama's predecessor administration, George W. Bush acknowledges that reverting to the pre-1967 borders would be impossible because all populations centres would have to be incorporated into Israel and that Palestinian refugees could not move into Israel (Miniter, 2012: 185). What Bush did was, he made an agreement with Prime Minister Sharon in which he supported Israeli construction of new apartments in areas that had already been built up, as long as the expansion did not go beyond the undeveloped area of West Bank. That was part of Bush negotiation for the Two-State solution. This

clearly contradicted to what Obama is trying to do. To impose the Two-State solution, Obama took a different approach whereby he wanted to apply for freeze settlements not only beyond the security borders of Israel but also within Israeli borders. Secretary Clinton noted that Obama wanted to see a 'stop' of settlements - not 'some' settlements (Abrahams, 2016).

Obama even took a step no US President had ever done before when abstained from vetoing the UN resolution that demanded Israel to stop its settlements because he thought that doing otherwise would only make matters worse for the peace negotiations (Beaumont, 2016). He did not even want to reconsider his predecessor's approaches in the Two-State solution but, instead, he totally dismissed the agreement. Clearly, this indicates that Obama possesses the traits of an aggressive leader and that he was more than willing to risk the US relationship with Israel.

Similarly, Netanyahu himself also was willing to take the risk that eventually would worsen the condition of the Two-State solution. Despite Obama imposing a freeze on Israeli settlements and abstaining from vetoing UN resolution, Netanyahu believed that the settlement freeze would not increase the chances for peace negotiations (Waxman, 2012: 75). Netanyahu continued to build more and more settlements regardless of what Obama had imposed. He even approved 1,600 housing units in East Jerusalem during vice president Joe Biden's visit to Jerusalem in 2010. Even worse, he announced it during the 10th months of Obama and Netanyahu freeze settlement agreement (Zippori, 2010).

Under the administration of Netanyahu, Israel seemed to be more vocal and provoking in terms of his actions in dealing with the Two-State solution. Despite Obama pushing for Israel to stop all of its settlements, Netanyahu himself also seemed to be reluctant to continue to negotiate. Note that the Israel-Palestinian conflict has been going on for a long time and there is a possibility that Israel and the Palestinian would have completely given up the basis of the Two-State solution. Therefore, this could explain on why Netanyahu himself did not consider to continue with the negotiation or even to abide by Barack Obama freezing the settlement. Netanyahu appeared to be more than willing to go against the US even though that action would risk Israel relationship with the US.

Different Interpretation on the Two-State Solution

On the Two-State solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict, Obama and Netanyahu were driven by their own interpretation in looking at the issue. This often resulted in a series of disagreements between them that led to the failure of the Two-state solution. In hypothesis two Byman and Pollack (2001) have mentioned that states led by delusional leaders would start wars and prolong them unnecessarily. They even argue that individuals can interpret information in different ways with certain fallacies being common. Miscalculation and misinterpretation often happen to leaders own self-deception.

Obama obsessions with freezing Israeli settlement had much to do with Palestinian less than willingness to negotiate with Israel regarding the Two-State solution (Miniter, 2012: 76). He acknowledged that Palestinian had been avoiding peace negotiations since Israel increased its settlement and hence the freeze settlement on Israel. However, Obama only looked at Palestinian sides. He had forgotten that the reasons behind those settlements were due to Israel fears about its own security (attacks from the Palestinians resistance and liberation groups).

When Obama took the office, he pledged that he wanted to restore the relations between the US and the Muslim World (Dodge, 2012: 214). He even promised that he would play an active role as the peace-broker in Israel and Palestine conflict and that explained why he immediately addressed the issue in his Cairo speech in 2019. Obama believed that he could solve the problem between Israel and Palestine that led him to assume the role of a peace-broker.

Netanyahu, on the other side, viewed that the larger the Israel territory the safer it felt. Palestinian had been increasingly involved in the act of armed resistance by giving its support to Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah who Israel considered as threats to its security. When Obama announced that, "Israel statehood cannot be fulfilled with permanent occupation of Palestinian Lands", Israel and Palestine should be based on the pre-1967 borders agreement. Israeli Foreign minister Abba Eban dismissed the statement saying that, "Israel could not go back to the pre-1967 borders because they squeeze Israel into a space less than nine miles away from Palestine and therefore, the Palestinians could easily fire bullets, mortars and rockets into Israel" (Minitier, 2012:183).

Israel is in a state of security dilemma (delusional) that it feared the Palestinian would keep on attacking them if they do not increase their territory until they felt secure. Some might say that threats do not exist in Israel because Israel itself has created its own security dilemma. Of course, if Israel continues to build more new housing areas, that would also trigger the Palestinian to also be prepared in case of any attacks from Israel. When one side increases its security, others will also do the same because that is a security dilemma is all about. When a leader perceives something as a threat to national security then, he or she will act accordingly to meet the particular threats.

Domestic Pressures Cause Disagreement Deeper

One thing about the Israel-Palestine conflict is that process, decision making and how it should behave does not solely depend on both leaders' own interests. Both Obama and Netanyahu made decisions according to the interest of their domestic pressure. In the case of Obama and Netanyahu, domestic institutions seemed to be more superior than the individuals' power. In Obama's Middle East policy, he did not merely carry it out by himself. He was constraint by the Congress, and pro-Israel lobby (the AIPAC) and public opinion (Guerlain, 2014: 485-488). Congress decisions or actions are likely to be affected by the pro-Israel lobby group because Congress power is derived from the members of the AIPAC. AIPAC is the strongest lobbyist inside congress whereby it can overcome other lobbyist organisations (Fisher, 2013).

On the issue of the Two-State solution, AIPAC had publicly urged the Obama administration not to push Netanyahu towards settlement freeze (Faris, 2013: 78). Similarly, US public opinion support for Israel over Palestinian had actually increased over the past 15 years. From 1988 to 2014, Republicans support had skyrocketed while Democratic support had increased slightly (Beauchamp, 2015). This indicated that both Republicans and Democrats had been sympathising more on Israel rather than on the Palestinians. This could explain on why Obama's push for the freeze settlements did not seem to be working out on Israel.

Likewise, Netanyahu was also pressured by his Likud party. It was found out that Netanyahu's Likud Party that won during the 2009 elections was very much different from the old one because they were too far to the right wing than the one in 1996-1999 (Feldman & Shikaki, 2009: 3). Secretary of State John Kerry even accused that the right-wing coalition under Netanyahu was the most 'right wing' coalition in Israel history and that, this coalition had the most extreme agendas and most importantly, the coalition had led to policies which could demolish the two-state solution (Gehrke, 2016).

The Likud party under Netanyahu claimed that they were sceptical about the prospects of peace and the creation of the Palestinian state (Beauchamp, 2015). There had been a lot of peace negotiations and signing of agreements, but none of the agreements had really brought an end to the conflict and therefore, this time around the right-wing Likud party seemed to be against the US Two-State solution. This could explain why Netanyahu kept on increasing Israel settlement beyond the undeveloped area of West Bank and eventually destroyed the basis of the Two-State solution. By looking at the

domestic pressures received by both leaders that sometimes might not be in line with what they intended to do might further provide more reasons for the bitterness of their relationships which then led to the failure of signing any peace agreement.

The Iranian Nuclear Programme Issue

This issue can be explained from the systemic level of analysis by looking from the Realist view on the international system. Although both Obama and Netanyahu saw the Iranian nuclear programme as a threat to the region, it differed in how they prioritise the issue. Israel was more concerned about Iran's nuclear proliferation than it was their conflicts with the Palestinians because they viewed Iran as the primary threat against their security (Waxman, 2012: 79). Obama, on the other hand, also saw Iranian nuclear programme as a threat but not as big as how the Israelis saw it. This contradicted the priority between them and it had jeopardised the Two-State solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

How did the Iranian nuclear programme relate with Israel in accordance with the systemic level of analysis which then contributed to the bitterness relations between Obama and Netanyahu? Iran has since become Israel's biggest and greatest enemy in relations to Israel's security and power position in the Middle East. According to Parsi (2007: 80), since the collapse of Soviet Union and the defeat of Iraq in 1991, the distribution of relative power in the region had shifted toward Iran and Israel as a nascent bipolar structure. When this happened, no power (previously Iraq under Saddam) that could balance against Iran power projection and threats in the region. Since the distribution of power has shifted, Iran and Israel have to compete against each other for their survival as the two new major powers, along with Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, that will shape the dynamics of the region.

To Israel, Iran could become its strategic competitor for Washington's support in the case of Israel's strategic utility to America being put in question. In addition to that, without the Russian strong presence in the Middle East, Israel's role in America's strategic calculations has also lost its *raison d'être* (Parsi, 2007: 80). By looking at the fear of unbalanced power that the Iranian could project towards Israel position and the region itself, Netanyahu wanted Obama to stop Iran nuclear proliferation programme and not just to constrain it. Furthermore, Iran had also been lending its support towards Hamas and Hezbollah to check Israel's influence in the Middle East and this includes their constant counter-attacks against the Israel state. Apparently, this was another reason on why Netanyahu kept on pressuring Obama to terminate Iranian nuclear programme.

Speaking about the US under Barack Obama administration, as aforementioned, the study has stated that Obama did express his concerns on the Iranian nuclear programme but, not as much as Netanyahu himself. He did not put much pressure towards Iran but instead, had taken a much slushier approach. This can be seen whereby Obama had taken action only to constrain Iranian's nuclear power but did not permanently terminate it. Obama previously had signed nuclear deals with Iran back in 2015. Under this agreement, sanctions would be on missile technologies and conventional weapons; terror list sanction that identified Iran as a state sponsor of terror; targeted sanctions on anyone connected with Iran's support on terror; authority to target Iran's development of ballistic missiles; authority to target Iran's human rights abuses and censorship; and authority to sanction Iran's destabilising regional activities including Syria and Yemen (The White House, 2016).

With the signing of the US-Iranian nuclear deals back in 2015, this then further deteriorated the relations between Obama and Netanyahu which then resulted in the failure of signing the Two-State solution. Therefore, why did Obama position towards Iran was seen as weak? The US under President Obama did not foresee any urgency or major threats coming from the systemic level that would make Obama stop Iranian nuclear

proliferation in the region. This is because, in terms of geography, the US is too far from Iran and that the US is much bigger than Iran (Waxman, 2012: 79).

The US knew that the Iranian missiles cannot reach them and even if it did, the US can easily intercept the missiles with their more advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles. This then can be related to the Realist view on the systemic level that states compete for power and security for their survival in the anarchical world. With the absence of threats to America's existence in the region, the US can live with Iran and its nuclear with an addition that they could always seek to contain it rather than to terminate it. Of course, if the pressure from the systemic level threatens the US position, interest and survival in that region, it would have sought for the Iranian nuclear programme termination without any hesitation.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine since 1948 can be seen as a continuous conflict without any final peace resolutions. Despite phases by phases of the peace negotiations, there have not been any agreements which can lead to the final peace treaty. As discussed in the study, the slow, stagnant and eventually the failure to sign the Two-State solution seems to have much to do with the sour relations between Obama and Netanyahu. The bitterness of their relations had been influenced by many factors that further deteriorated both leaders' relationships.

From the discussion, the level of analysis concept by Waltz, and as it is further developed by other scholars, can be seen as the most suitable framework to be used in discussing factors that influencing both leaders' behaviour in the Two-State solution. The level of analysis provides a comprehensive explanation and understanding on the disagreements between Obama and Netanyahu. It explains that the dynamics of both leaders in addressing the Two-State solution was not solely coming from one level of analysis only, but it was rather a combination of the three levels of analysis that pushed them to act and behave in certain ways that eventually resulted to the failure of the Two-State solution. As discussed in this study also, the underlying factors that contributed to both leaders bitterness includes the aggressive characters by both leaders (individual level), different interpretation on the Two-State solution (individual level), domestic pressures (domestic level) and the Iranian nuclear programme (systemic level).

To conclude, this study has attempted to discuss and analysed the reasons behind the tense relationships between Obama and Netanyahu that contributed to the failure of signing the Two-State solution. In addition to that, the study hopes that this discussion can broaden up to a much higher level in the future with more of other reasons or factors could be added up into the discussions that this study might have overlooked.

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