

CHAPTER III

RATIONAL CHOICE ON TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY TO ISIS IN SYRIA AND THE RETIRE OF "ZERO-PROBLEM-WITH-NEIGHBOR" POLICY

Wishy-washy action of Turkey in responding ISIS was confusing but also surprising the world. At the first time, Turkey did not want to get involved in attacking ISIS by military intervention, even though this country had already joined on the U.S-led coalitions. Then, Turkey got angry after ISIS bombed Suruc, a city in Turkey that killed 32 people. As an action of its anger, Turkey finally conducted military intervention to ISIS in Syrian border by carried out airstrikes and it decided to establish ISIS free-zone in Turkish-Syrian borders and cooperated with the U.S. Turkey's decision to fight against ISIS by conducting military intervention is not only a matter between Turkey and ISIS, but it also involves its relationship with Syria. The Turkey's attack to ISIS in Syrian border, automatically becomes foreign policy matter of Turkey against Syria. Moreover, Turkey's decision to establish ISIS Free-Zone in Turkish-Syrian borders creates a condition in which those borders are full with Turkish army or in chaotic condition because of its military intervention.

A. "Zero-problem-with-neighbor" Policy

Ufuk Alatas explained the merit of Turkey in which explains the good things of Turkey, was started in 2009, when Turkey with its previous President, Abdullah Gül implemented the new foreign policy of Turkey which is called as "zero-

problem-with-neighbor” policy¹. Turkey realized, as neighborhood, border conflict is prevalent and countries should avoid the war and should give priority to cooperation for each other. Turkey’s goal is to create a peaceful, stable and secure regional neighborhood. At the beginning of its independent, Turkey did not have relations with Syria, as its close neighbor. To accomplish its dazzling goal, Turkey has conveyed a multi-dimensional foreign policy vision and taken a pro-active role in conflict resolution in the region. One of its efforts that has been proven when Turkey helped to solve the conflict between Arab and Israeli. At that time, Turkey become the mediator partner for Israel and Syria negotiation to talk about Israel intervention in Gaza in 2008. Since Syria does not have good relations with Israel because its cruelty through Palestine, this negotiation could not change anything for Palestinian. In other words, it could not bring good fate to them².

The seriousness of Turkey to implement its “zero-problem-with-neighbor” foreign policy can be seen from Turkey’s intention to open the relations with Syria and Iraq. As explained by Mustafa Kibaroglu, Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at MEF University in Istanbul that in 2009, these three countries signed and aimed at improving relations in the areas of trade, interior affairs, welfare and housing, health, transport, water sources, energy, and agriculture. Moreover, Turkey and Syria added cooperation in terms of tourism, education, communication, electricity and industry. The act of these three countries

¹ “Turkish Foreign Policy in 2009: A Year of Pro-activity”, Insight Turkey Vol.12 No.1, 2010, SETA Foundation.

² Ibid. see p3

made international society surprised because it has happened for a long time that Turkey treated them more like foes rather than close friends³.

After Cold War era, Turkey can be concluded as follower of the west. Ahmet Davutoglu as The Prime Minister of Turkey confidently said that Turkey is part of the Western block, the international community began to look to Turkey as a place of stability and a “bridge” country between east and west⁴.

Foreign policy as the policy of a country is really needs to manage the behavior to other country. When the foreign policy of a country has been decided and applied in a government, then no one can disturb. Likewise Turkey’s decision that finally using military intervention related to fight against ISIS as the terrorism group, this similarly as the implementation of foreign policy. It is because the behavior of Turkey to attack the area of Syria that now occupied by ISIS. Moreover, it connected with Syria, as a place where Turkey carried out its military intervention.

In the beginning of Syrian uprising, Turkey acted nonchalantly. Perhaps the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad deemed so harsh until Erdogan suggest Assad to do political reform rather than pressed the opposition⁵. Perhaps Turkey still concern to its “zero-problem-with-neighbor” foreign policy to avoid the real war with Syria, after 3 years have sentimental fluctuate relationship. However, after cruel demonstration in Syria by Syrian opposition, Turkey seems to be act to worn notify

³ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “What Went Wrong with the ‘Zero Problem with Neighbors’ Doctrine?”, Turkish Policy Quarterly, Fall 2012, Vol. 11, No. 3, Kadir Has University, Istanbul. <http://www.turkishpolicy.com>

⁴ See “Turkey’s foreign Policy Vision”, Insight Turkey Vol.10 No.1, 2008.

⁵ Raymond Hinnebusch, op.cit. See the “Negative tit for tat” chapter.

Assad. Then Turkey supported Syrian opposition to attack Assad regime and Erdogan also said Turkey would not stop until Assad resign from his position as the President of Syria⁶. Related to this action, the “zero-problem-with-neighbor” policy was questioned by international society. Moreover, the decision of Turkey to conduct military intervention through ISIS also made the relations of Turkey-Syria in deadlock. Once again, the foreign policy of Turkey which is “zero-problem-with-neighbor” being asked.

Turkey’s “zero-problem-with-neighbor” foreign policy is considered as a successful foreign policy to bring and influence countries in the world to keep the peacefulness at that time. However, it seems that Turkey betrays its own policy in the respond of Syrian Uprising and ISIS. If in the beginning of ISIS establishment Turkey does not want to get involved in doing any intervention, but finally Turkey already changed its mind to attack ISIS by conducting military intervention and also supporting Syrian opposition to overthrow Assad regime, it is a sign that Turkey put off its foreign policy in terms of these international issues.

B. Turkey’s Reason behind Military Intervention

There should be reason why Turkey finally changed its act and behavior related to ISIS issue. Since this country avoids military intervention at the first time, even it already join in the U.S led-coalition, international society needs to wait for more than a year to see this country changed its action by conducting military intervention to fight against ISIS. Then finally on July, 2015 Turkey surprised the world by carried out airstrikes in Syrian border as its action to fight against ISIS.

⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, op.cit. p 91-92.

One interesting thing that should be highlight is Turkey has to ask a help from the US for its military intervention.

Turkey's main reason to conduct military intervention to ISIS is the bombing of Suruc, the city of Turkey that carried out by ISIS and killed 32 people. Nevertheless international society said it just classic reason. For a long time ISIS tried to destroy Turkey and tried to occupied its border, and for conducting military intervention, that bombing being a reason for Turkey to fight against ISIS. Moreover, this military intervention is cooperated with the U.S by establishing ISIS Free-Zone in Turkish-Syrian borders, and Turkey also allowing the U.S to build air base in Incirlik. However, those efforts to fight against ISIS are exaggerated if the trigger is only the bombing of Suruc, then the prediction is Turkey conducting military intervention to fight against ISIS is not only because of Suruc bombing, it also has other interest which finally made Turkey changes its mind to use military intervention in its action to fight against ISIS.

The brutality of ISIS is supposed to make the countries in the world have to concern to protect their countries. Wherever the country is, the protection through terrorism should be increase. So did Turkey, as the neighbor of Syria and Iraq, where the chaos happened because of ISIS. The action of Turkey that finally conduct military intervention to fight against ISIS can predicted as the action just copying Egypt action to respond ISIS. Egypt at the first time also acted like Turkey which did not want to conduct military intervention as long as ISIS did not destroy its country. However, after the murder incident from ISIS that killed 21 Egyptians of Christian Orthodox, Egypt carried out its airstrike and bombed ISIS headquarter

in Libya. Then after that, Egypt did not do any military intervention anymore to attack ISIS. Perhaps, one admonish is enough to prevent ISIS destroys its people.

Since Turkey wants to imitate Egypt's action, Turkey finally did a "contact" with ISIS by conducting military intervention because of the bombing in Suruc by ISIS. This is a normal situation for a country in which it tries to protect its country from any disturbance. Moreover, Turkey was not the party that begin the war, but ISIS. It does not stop on that, besides that, Turkey also cooperated then with the U.S to establish "ISIS free-zone" in Turkish-Syrian borders. The concept of "ISIS free-zone" is the zone that cannot be entered by ISIS. Turkish army has been sent to secure this zone. The support of Turkish government to Syrian opposition also shown on this "ISIS free-zone" establishment. Turkey, with the U.S considered this zone also as "safe zone" for refugees, as long as the refugees keep this zone from ISIS, and Kurdistan⁷. Even though people in common can conclude that Turkey's action by conducting military intervention is not only to keep its country from ISIS, but also from Kurdish. The question is where the sense of "ISIS free-zone" is, if Kurdistan which is not part of ISIS is prohibited to enter this zone, even the fact is they fight against ISIS.

Moreover, the deadlock of Turkey-Syria relations brings Turkey to its second interest, the goal to overthrow Assad regime. It can be concluded as interdependent relations between Turkey and Syrian refugees in which they have the same goal to overthrow Assad regime, Turkey promises "safe zone" for the refugees

⁷ Anne Barnard, et.al, "Goals Diverge and Perils Remain as U.S. and Turkey Take on ISIS", July 27, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com>

and support them to attack Assad regime. It can makes the refuges feel safe and grow the confidence that they will easily win to overthrow Assad regime. It is proven that this is not only the matter of destroy ISIS, but also to overthrow Assad regime, and protect Turkey's area from Kurdistan.

C. Turkey's Rational Choice

The understanding of the relations between two countries or more, or even the domestic problem of a country itself is a part of international relations studies. International relations studies also maintains the foreign policy, which is also called international relations policy. Foreign policy is a policy that country should have to maintain its relations with other countries. This policy contains national interests, national security, ideological goals, and economic prosperity of a country that have to be imply to other countries as a subject of behavior. Meanwhile, the country placed itself as the central actor.

Juliet Kaarbo in her article "The Analysis of Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective" elaborates that there are internal and external factors that influence foreign policy⁸. In internal power, a country thinks rationally by perceived it from public opinion, culture, and even the leader's personality as the factors to decide a foreign policy. Meanwhile, the external factor usually influences by its political system, economic wealth, and military power as the mean to show how powerful the country is. Nevertheless, the foreign policy of a country could be changed or applied to other countries by the behavior of them. The country's role is not as an

⁸ See p7-19

agent since it is abstract and has no agency. Only human beings can be the true agents as the source of all international politics and all change therein⁹.

The previous explanation shows that the most important thing of foreign policy that is created by the head of government or the decision maker is to manage the act of a country, even more, he/she becomes the representative of a country to bring the interest of the country itself. However, it is also possible that the foreign policy made by the decision maker is based on the interest of the decision maker itself. Foreign policy uses as a tool to put on the interest of a country, and it has models as the substance to facilitate the decision maker in order to focus on what issues must be faced. There are numbers of model in foreign policy, they are rational model, bureaucratic model, and pluralist model. On the analysis of Turkey's action on which its turns to military intervention for attacking ISIS, the rational model is the proper model to examine what is really happened to Turkey.

The rational model of foreign policy is an approach of foreign policy making based on rational choice theory. Rational choice theory says that an individual or a party has priority among the available alternative choices that allow them to state which option is more profitable based on cost and benefit¹⁰. Henry R. Nau (2009) also states that rational model is based on realism theory¹¹. First, it is made by the central government to reach the nation's objective which country's position is as a unitary actor. Second, it is made by considering the cost and benefit as the output

⁹ Valerie M. Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations", Brigham Young University, 2005. p 2-3.

¹⁰ Susanne Lohmann, "The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics 2nd Edition", Palgrave Mcmillan, 2008. <http://www.dictionarofeconomics.com>

¹¹ Henry R. Nau, "Perspectives on International Relations: Power, Institutions, and Ideas Second Edition", George Washington University, 2009.

of the policy made. Third, it is made in the crisis condition. Rational model theory of foreign policy will be a tool to explain why finally Turkey conducted military intervention through ISIS, and to explain the reason behind Turkey's option to choose the U.S as friend in establishing "ISIS free-zone" in the Turkish-Syrian borders. While there are other strong coalitions which is Russia and its allies which have sophisticated military power and proof by the devastated ISIS in Aleppo. Or why not working alone to fight ISIS, as Egypt did.

Coalition has means to strengthen power, it means more parties cooperate together, more powerful the coalition is. Turkey chose to stand in the U.S coalition to attack ISIS. Turkey already joined on the U.S led-coalition for destroying ISIS since 2014, but without any struggle to show up its effort to fight against ISIS. Then in July 2015, after a year of its coalition, Turkey chose to conduct military intervention to ISIS with the help of the U.S which increased the U.S excitement. Moreover, Turkey has allowed the U.S to strengthen its power by building the air base in Incirlik to ease the U.S to conduct air intervention to ISIS.

People keep asking why Turkey chose that action. The question is whether Turkey has already thought about it wisely using airstrikes to fight against ISIS is strike killed ISIS members and not hurt and kill Syrian. Or else, whether the military intervention is the only way to overthrow ISIS rather to use the diplomatic way. Or to avoid so much cost, Turkey did not involve on military intervention, then the condition will not be getting worse. If want to imitate Egypt perfectly, carried out airstrikes once is enough. Even until now it works because ISIS could not carried out any attack in Egypt. More, the incident that killed 32 Turkish is unbalance with

how many innocent Syrian that will killed by its airstrikes. Moreover, imagine how many chaos, example people lost their house, lost their family and so on. Then, in economically, how much money that will spend for military intervention. If seen from the question, of course, many losses are obtained. But Turkey already choose its “proper” way to revenge. Then why Turkey chose the U.S as its “friend” rather than conducted the military intervention by itself. In this term, the concept of rational model in foreign policy action will implement by the explanation.

As the explanation above, rational model leaning on the theory of rational choice. By collecting any choices, then analyzing which choice that has more benefit and less cost. The perfect one will be out as the best choice and also as the decision that will use by someone to implement. So does Turkey. Definitely Turkey’s decision to undertake military intervention is surely in well discussed. More, the presence of this military intervention, Turkey should be a little ashamed of having been betrayed on its "zero-problem-with-neighbor" foreign policy.

Turkey in terms of Domestic Security

In term of revenge, it does not the matter of quantity. 33 Turkish killed by ISIS perhaps is unbalance of number, but once more, it could not be compared. This is not the matter of quantity, but the human right violation and also the disturbance of the stabilizing of a country. Like human being, surely country has self-defense. Of course the incident was hurt Turkey and its sovereignty. Turkey is likened calm country, which still keep its foreign policy in term of its relation to neighboring countries, and do not want to be involved in intervening in ISIS in order to maintain

its relations with Syria not getting worse. It can be concluded that, regardless of which must be maintained in order to foreign relations, but more important is the domestic defense. Country, including Turkey, should give priority to the domestic relations, as same as protecting its citizens. Regardless of the number of victims that exist in Turkey, it is all the responsibility of the Turkey, no matter how much risk, protect the citizens is the most important thing. More, Turkey is supporting Syrian opposition and also protecting them. There is no reason for Turkey to not protecting its citizens if the citizens of Syria be laboriously protected by this country. So better Turkey "embarrass" him in front of the world, rather than having to start viewing people angry, suffering, and fear of ISIS.

Then the image of Turkish leader also is at stake. Erdogan as president of Turkey was indeed loved by his citizens¹². Hamble and populist become “weapons” to win over the heart of citizens of Turkey. The decision to attack the ISIS who had attacked its citizens is also the effort of Erdogan to not losing the sympathy of the citizens. So, people will feel happy their leader is more concerned with people than the foreign policy that good in the eyes of the world, but dilapidated inside.

Turkey Choose the U.S as its “friend”

Talking about who will be Turkey’s partner to conduct military intervention, of course the U.S is the perfect choice. First, it is because since October 2, 2014 Turkey has been doing little change in its attitude to fight ISIS by choosing to join

¹² “Beredar Video Erdogan Shalat di Pintu Masjid karena Terlambat Datang Shalat Jum'at” by ResistNews Blog, December 2, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com>
Also watch: “Presiden Turki Recep Tayyip Tidak Mau Tangannya Dicum dan Membagi bagikan roti” by BDC Video, November 16, 2014. <http://www.youtube.com>

the U.S led-coalition along with other countries, including Australia, Bahrain, Canada, France, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates. However, its intention was only to join the coalition, not as aggressive as the U.S which carried out bombing raids against ISIS. Then it is not surprising if eventually Turkey chose the U.S to conduct this military intervention picked the U.S as a friend. Imagine if Turkey conducted military intervention by itself, then it possibly would be considered as betraying its agreement to join the U.S led-coalition. Moreover, it means that Turkey being other coalition that will attack ISIS and also as the other side of the U.S led-coalition. It is different from Egypt, which did not join any coalitions that made it not bound to any parties.

Then there is other rational choice as the tool to succeed Turkey to tight its relationship with the U.S. Turkey has previously cooperated with the U.S in terms of military in Cold War and Korean War¹³. The U.S and Turkey signed a military assistance agreement that went beyond their common interest to deter the Soviet Union from annexing strategic territory along the Bosphorus when Cold War era, and committed themselves to active in cooperation and mutual defense. Besides military assistance, economic assistance was also provided while Turkey's participation in the Korean War deepened its friendship with Western comrade-in-arms¹⁴. The coalition between Turkey and the U.S in Cold War and Korean War also brought Turkey as the member of NATO. It means, benefit gained into double,

¹³ Joshua W. Walker, "Learning Strategic Depth: Implications of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Doctrine", *Insight Turkey* Vol.9 No.3, July, 2003, SETA Foundation. p35

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

in addition to repelling ISIS, diplomatic relations between Turkey and the U.S became more closely.

To destabilize the government of Assad, Turkey should have the right friend and the U.S is the right choice in which their same purpose that want to overthrow Assad regime. Turkey initially have made efforts to overthrow the Assad regime with the support of the opposition, but it was not strong enough to destabilize the Assad government. By cooperating with the U.S, it automatically will help Turkey to build its strength and it helps Turkey to overthrow Assad regime who violates the democracy which also become the main concern of the U.S. So, by choosing the U.S as its friend, Turkey will not be the one who blamed by the world because of the chaotic condition through Syria in military intervention against ISIS, because the US will protect its ally in same level as it protects itself.

In military power, Turkey is not weak, even classified as a powerful country in the military. Based on Global Fire Power Website, Turkey in the 10th position of military strength in the world, with the U.S as the first stronger country¹⁵. Imagine if the two countries are strong in terms of the military, the U.S in the first rank of the strongest, and Turkey ranked 10th strongest in the world. It will create the fear not only for ISIS, but also Syria. Then the spreading of wrong ideology of ISIS in the world will be decreased, and the peaceful world like what the U.S dreams will be created.

¹⁵ "Turkey joins China and India in attempting to become a large scale military supplier through several high profile ongoing development programs" in *Global Fire Power*, November 13, 2015. <http://www.globalfirepower.com>

Besides the presence of this coalition, it also will reduce the expenditure of money for the war. It shows from the permission granted by Turkey for the U.S to build air base in Incirlik be one of the strategies that Turkey do, it not has to provide aircraft, because it already provide by the U.S. Even more, Turkey only has to spend more money to provide the sophisticated weapons. This war also undoubtedly helped by the intake of funds from other countries who are also as the member of the U.S led-coalition.

One Step Closer to Join European Union (EU)

Turkey such as loss of its identity, it cannot be considered as Muslim country since it has secular mind and westernized, but Turkey is also located in the Middle East and it is the birthplace where the history of the world's largest Islamic empire, Ottoman Empire. This country geographically located in Asia and Europe that makes Turkey as a giddy country. Considered as a snob country that forgets its Islamic history, Turkey seem ignored by Middle East countries. In western, Turkey does not get well treatment otherwise.

Considered as the "greenhorn" makes Turkey difficult to be accepted in Europe, although the desire of it is very big. It is proven from Turkey's status that has hung over four decades of wanting to join the EU, but has not received the approval. The rational choice that selected by the Turkey to join with the US to undertake military intervention is an attempt of Turkey for showing up its power. The country that has always ruled out by Western and Middle East is able to pick up a friend as strong as the US to intervene the enemy of people in the world, which

is ISIS. This will bring up the image that Turkey should not be underestimated and should be reckoned in Asia, and Europe. In other words, Turkey will be easier to be accepted into the EU.

Russia is not the right “friend”

Fickle action of United Arab Emirates (UAE) fortunately not doing by Turkey. After the appearance of other coalition, which is Russia coalition, UAE choose to join on it. Probably, UAE want to acts like neutral to fight against ISIS. Because this country still also join in the U.S led-coalition. It is known that this way was used by UAE to strengthen its power to face Iran in Persian Bay. However, Turkey did not do that way even though Russia is also strong country and perhaps it would be feared by ISIS. It is proven by Aleppo which can be free from ISIS by bombing from Syria. There are numbers of reasons why Turkey still standing to the U.S even Russia showing off its effectiveness in fighting ISIS. First, it can be said that Russia is too late because this country decided to conduct military intervention in September, while Turkey had already attacked ISIS in July 2015 with the help from the U.S. Even there is always be any opportunity for Turkey to change its coalition, but Turkey seems not in the same line with Russia. Russia is really wants that Assad defenses his position as the President of Syria. While, Turkey hates Assad, it wants Assad overthrow in his position. No matter what, Turkey will not join any party which supports Assad regime.

Other thing that has no connection with ISIS problem, Russia always has different vision and mission with EU. For example in Ukraine problem, Russia get

involved to prevent this country to join on EU. It will probably be a problem for Turkey if it changes to Russia coalition. Turkey will not have chance to join EU, meanwhile this will be slows its ever after dream, joining into EU.

Rational choice has perfectly applied in Turkey's decision through its way to attack ISIS. The betrayed of "zero-problem-with-neighbor" policy by Turkey could not be a serious problem as long as the domestic matter is protected well by the government. Then, Turkey join to coalition to attacking ISIS, since it was only the U.S (before Russia appears on September 2015) that using military intervention to ISIS. Turkey will unable to create another coalition that beat the power of the U.S because the U.S is the strongest in the world in terms of military. Rather be second coalition, join with the U.S will make Turkey get so much benefit in terms of strengthening its military, closing their relations, and decreasing the cost of war. Nevertheless, still these two countries had not showed their success on attacking ISIS. This group still do terrorism actions and seems it is not afraid with military intervention from the U.S coalition. Then, not joining with Russia is an accurate way since Turkey has another goal, which is to overthrow Assad regime.