

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter has a purpose to introduce the high points of the issues in this thesis. In the beginning, this chapter will inform and discuss the background of the issue. The next step is this chapter would like to propose a research question in order to facilitate the writer to identify and analyze the issue. After proposing the research question, this chapter will discuss the theoretical framework which involves a theory and a concept that plays a role as a tool for the writer to analyze the issue. Furthermore, this chapter also will propose some hypothesis as the temporary answers in some ways that will be explained by a research method. At the end of this chapter, the writer will provide the structure of writing as guidance for this whole thesis.

### A. Background

In this current time, Syrian Civil War takes so much attention from the international politics and a lot of humanitarian organizations due to the aftermaths that caused by the war. Moreover, Syria is also known as a place where the big crisis of humanitarian in this 21<sup>st</sup> century happens, the next Proxy War, and also a war between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims which escalates the gap between these 2 different sects. Syrian Civil War occurred as the impact of Arab Spring which was happened in December 2010.

A throwback to the time when Arab Spring was begun, it was started to spread in the Middle East and North Africa countries and tried to change the governmental system in

most of the Arabian countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, Lebanon, Algeria, Jordan, Oman, and Syria. Arab Spring is a term for the wave of social protest where the uprising of revolution toward Pro-Democracy happened.<sup>1</sup>

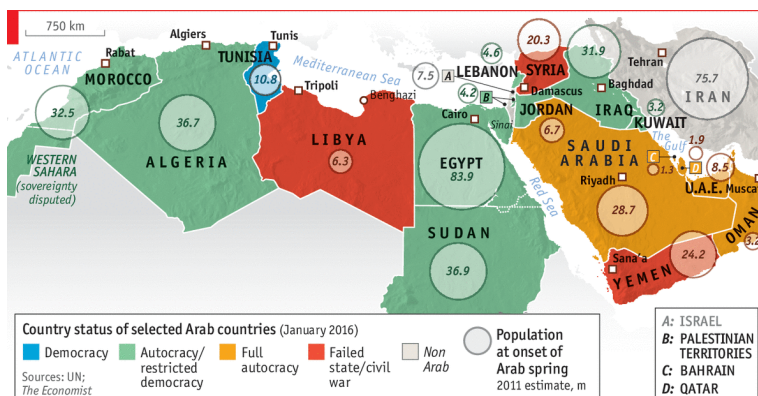
Arab Spring appeared because of the failure of the government in making economic policy, justice or keeping the prosperity of its citizen. In most cases, it happens under the Authoritarian or even Dictatorship governmental system that has been governed in a long-standing time. Moreover, the effect of Arab Spring is spreading and destabilizing the other countries which concern about rights, social justice, and representative of democracy.<sup>2</sup> This term of the phenomenon was inspired by Eastern Europe in the post -Cold War, and as the domino effect of some countries who wanted to implement pro-democracy in their system.

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<sup>1</sup>Mohamedou, O. Mohammad-Mahmoud (2012). *The Arab Spring in Historical Perspective "The Arab Uprisings: A Conflict Transformation Perspective"*. Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peace building (Switzerland; Caux, 2012), p.3-9

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.9

Figure 1 1.1 The Map of Arab Spring



Economist.com

Source: Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/01/daily-chart-8> on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

In December 2010, Tunisia, as a pioneer of Arab Spring started its first revolution to tackle down its authoritarian president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was a quick victory for Tunisian. Their revolution was organized and without using any power of the military to fight against its protestors, Ben Ali chose to end this up because of seeing violence in other Arab Spring countries and made him understand to avoid it, so he came to an agreement.<sup>3</sup> Inspired by the succession of Tunisia, Egypt people succeeded to topple Hosni Mubarak who was their president for 30 years in 18 days of protest without any military power and violence. They brought down Hosni Mubarak due to its

<sup>3</sup> Culbertson, Shelly (2016). *Tunisia is an Arab Spring Success Story*. Observer. Retrieved on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from <http://observer.com/2016/04/tunisia-is-an-arab-spring-success-story/>

failure on economic sector.<sup>4</sup> However, the wave of Arab Spring did not always bring the success of wind of change to the Middle East or North Africa; some countries were avoiding Arab Spring to arrive in their countries such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

Arab Spring seems does not fit in Libya, Yemen, and Syria because of its government who refused it to happen in their country. Therefore, the response of Arab Spring in Libya, Yemen, and Syria was a disaster for the people who pro-democracy in those countries because it is fulfilled with bloody civil war, violence, terrorism, and a big mass of fleeing refugees.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, among the destruction that happened in the Arab Spring, the most complex and breath-taking destructions are in Syria.

Many people assumed that Bashar Al-Assad is the one who responsible for every mess that happened in Syria. He is an official president of Syria since 2000. He was a big hope for Syrian people to bring a better regime. At the beginning of his era, he could generate Syria economically and politically, such as exporting agricultural product and oil.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, he was sure that Arab Spring will not touch a peaceful country like Syria. However, in 2007 Syria decreased its performance in the financial sector, the investment rate was increased from 17% to 23%, and the agricultural investment was in 16% fell to 9%.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the extensive drought in 2006 until 2011 brought so many disadvantages for the farmers and also the

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<sup>4</sup>Staff, Nation (2011). *The Arab Spring Country by Country*. The National. Retrieved on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from (Haran, 2016)

<sup>5</sup>*ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Haran, VP (2016). *Roots of the Syrian Civil Crisis*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (India; New Delhi). p.8-9

<sup>7</sup>(Bērziņš, 2013)(2013). *Civil War in Syria: Origins, Dynamics, and Possible Solutions*. National Defence Academy of Latvia. p.3

decreasing of oil production in 2009. As the effect, the number of poverty in Syria in 2011 is 34,3% while in the rural area was 62%.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, as the Arab Spring started, the revolt first occurred in such agricultural cities as Homs, and Hama. This issue has escalated to the large cities like Damascus and Aleppo which knew as Sunni majority areas.

The other reason for Arab Spring occurred in Syria is because of the political suppression. There was no political party in Syria besides Ba'ath party who can lead Syria. The other example of no freedom in Assad's regime is the apprehension of a group of young men in Dar'a for drawing anti-regime graffiti was incongruous because Al-Assad captured, tortured, and even killed them. This action tempted big mass protestors about the cruelty of the government under Bashar Al-Assad. He tends to use military and security forces to face the protestors, while Syrian military training for the external threats but not for the internal disturbance. As the result, government coalition with the military against civilians meets the dimension of Civil War.<sup>9</sup>

The Civil War that happened in Syria made that country became fragile of the threat from the outside and inside of a country. As a country that has potential in mineral and hydropower, a lot of groups wanted to intervene in Syrian Civil War so they can conquer some parts in Syria. One of the big threats for Syria government is ISIL or known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. At the beginning of 2014, ISIL started came to Syria and began its occupation in some cities such as Mosul and Raqqa.<sup>10</sup> The other big threats

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>9</sup>Manfreda, Primoz (2017). *Top 10 Reasons for the Uprising in Syria: Reasons Behind the Syrian Uprising*. ThoughtCo. Retrieved on November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/top-10-reasons-for-the-uprising-in-syria-2353571>

<sup>10</sup>Robinson, Eric; Egel, Daniel; Johnston B. Patrick; Sean, Mann; Rothenberg, D. Alexander; Stebbins, David (2017). *When*

came from Assad's opposition, Free Syrian Army, groups that funded from the United States and its gulf countries, and its allies, and also the other groups that come up with their own interests.

In the bloody Syrian civil war, to keep the balance of power from the opposition groups who fight against the regime, Syria has aligned with a superpower country and a country who has the same belief with Al-Assad, they are Russia and Iran. Iran supports Syria at the regional level because it has become the staunchest supporter of Assad and it's a part of Alawite community. While Russia, gives support at the global level, because Moscow provides an obvious a diplomatic shield for Damascus regime, and support it with arms supplies. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in Vladivostok, Russian President, Vladimir Putin stated that *"We signed major contracts with Syria some 5-7 years ago, and we are complying with them in full....However, we will continue our consultation both with our friends in Syria and with the countries in the region."*<sup>11</sup> This statement clearly expressed that Moscow will support Damascus unconditionally and took any risk that would happen to Russia itself. In this thesis, the writer will focus on how deep Russian involvement in Syrian Civil War and also will try to explain how the internal and external affairs can influence Russia to involve in Syrian Civil War.

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*The Islamic State comes to town.* RAND. Retrieved on October, 26<sup>th</sup> 2017 from : <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/when-isil-comes-to-town.html>

<sup>11</sup>Rahaman, Md. Shafiqur(2016). *Syrian Civil War: A Historical Study from the Russian Perspectives.* International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Education (Bangladesh). p.8

## **B. Research Question**

Based on the background that has been written above, the writer purposed a research sentence in the form of a question in order to describe and explain more about the issue by formulating the question: “*Why does Russia Support Syrian Regime in the Syrian Civil War?*”

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

### **1. The Concept of Perception by Walter S. Jones and K.J Holsti (1988)**

Generally, the definition of Perception is the process of interpreting and understanding the information from the environment or also recognize as an awareness action toward the information that someone got. According to the book, *The Logic of International Relations* that has been written by Walter S. Jones and K. J Holsti, Perception has an important role in influencing the actors of world politics that caused a conflicting situation in the international arena. Moreover, according to Walter Jones, perception is about the subjective ways of someone in defining facts. Perception is one of the crucial factors of Human behavior because it could construct or shape the behavior of someone or something and perception influences the impressions of someone for other people's traits and personalities. Furthermore, Walter S. Jones has divided the composition of the concept of perception into three parts, there are:

#### **a) *Belief***

*Belief* which has a definition about the certainty of someone towards reality description is proved, true, and known. Usually, belief is based on the acceptance of the information from the

environment, even though sometimes is not always similar to the existing data. The belief of someone will be shaped by his/her values that can determine which one is wrong or right or which one is more valuable. In this case, Russia and Syria have similar beliefs toward the bad impact that made by the western countries especially United States of America in influencing its country to be separated.

### ***b) Values***

*Value* means someone's preference toward a certain statement of reality over the others. Moreover, a value is not referring to what does exist but tends to what should exist. One of the example in this case is Syria has a value by preferring to ask help from Russia rather than the west in facing the internal demonstration from its citizens.

### ***c) Cognition***

It is about the information that has been accepted from the environment. Cognition is the fundamental base for the building or changing the perception system. The concept of changing national perception refers to introduce the new cognition that will change the beliefs and values of that state itself.<sup>12</sup> In the relation whit this thesis, Cognition has a role in influencing Russia the information about Syria which has influence Russia to assist and support Syrian Government in the Syrian Civil War.

## **2. The Concept of Geopolitics by Saul Bernard Cohen (1964)**

Geopolitics is a science that based on geography and has a strong interaction and relation with the political powers of a state, therefore the core of a region from the geographical point of view

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<sup>12</sup>Alfadh F. Muhammad (2012). *PersepsiGerakanMahasiswa Islam TerhadapPolitikLuarNegeri Indonesia di Timur Tengah*. Prudent Media (Indonesia; Yogyakarta-2012), p.15-18



provides an arrangement for geopolitics and must to be proceeded to succeed for the long term. In addition, According to Karl Haushofer, Geopolitics means the obligation to keep and take care of the right to the soil, to the land, and also to the rights of the people and cultural lands. This also means that geographic factors are important to be considered for the diplomatic and military planners in every decision making of policy or strategy in order to increase the performance of a state in the world arena for a long term. There are some aspects to analyze Geopolitics in order to help the policymakers in making certain political conclusion and project for the future. According to Cohen, there are 2 important aspects:

1. The description of geographic which relate to political power. It means, Geopolitics is related with how geographical factors such as territory, strategic location and natural resources affect the relationship among the states.
2. Put the spatial frameworks that include interacting political power units. It means to build a relationship with the complex international politics based on the geographical situation.

### **Geo-strategy**

Geo-strategy is a subfield of geopolitics and it explains the strategy of geopolitics or known as a geographic guideline for a state's foreign policy. Moreover, geostrategic stresses the efforts of a state in maximizing the project military power and maneuvering diplomatic activity. However, a state has limited resources and capabilities, therefore they must focus on the specific areas of this world in the military and political way. Geo-strategy of a state is not always motivated by the geographic reasons or geographical

actors, but it could be based on similar ideology, interest group, or even from the interest of the leader.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, a geo-strategy of a state usually can be described by using some standards, which are:

1. The position of a state by geographically and its relationship in the military operation arena.
2. The position of a state from the important regions and international communications such as trading and economic area, industrial regions, or transportation lines, natural resources, etc.
3. A state's territorial size, in order to organize the needs of defense and to conduct the military operation.
4. Utilizing the geopolitical space to fulfill the military sector especially for military construction and conducting a war.
5. The distance between the potential and the real area for a war and military conflicts.<sup>14</sup>

The implication of Geopolitics concept in this thesis is to analyze the reason why Russia wanted to involve in the Syria Civil War, especially in accordance with the benefits that Russia got economically, politically, and military. Moreover, this concept also consists of Geo-strategy which will explain the strategy of Russia to get their Geopolitical interest by helping Syrian Government in the Syrian Civil War.

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<sup>13</sup>Sahoo, Devandra Kumar (2010). A Geopolitical perspective on Central Asia – China Relation. Jawaharlal Nehru University (Bangladesh; Dhaka-2010), p.46 - 50

<sup>14</sup>Isakova, Irina (2005). *Russian Governance in the Twenty-First Century: Geo-strategy, Geopolitics, and Governance*. Frank Cass (United States of America; Oxon – 2005), p.14

## **D. Hypothesis**

In order to answer the research question, the writer provides a temporary framework to understand the issue of the topic. This paper provides two points as the reason on why Russia involved in Syrian Civil War:

- a. Russian geopolitical interest will be fulfilled, especially in Military, Economy and Political sector.
- b. The supports that Russia gave to Syria as a form of their identity and consistency of Russia.

## **E. Research Methodology**

This research used qualitative research method by data collecting. The method of data collecting is conducted through the library research such as printed and electronic media, online newspaper, internet, video, articles or journals and some reference books.

## **F. Structure of Writing**

To simplify the whole chapter in this thesis, the writer will divide it into 5 parts. In the **Chapter I** will describe:

1. **Background of Issues**
  - a) History of Arab Spring
  - b) The impact of Arab Spring on Syria
  - c) The beginning of involvement Russia in Syrian Civil War
2. **Research Question**
3. **Theoretical Framework**
  - a) The Concept of Geopolitics by Karl Haushofer
  - b) The Concept of Perception by Walter S. Jones and K. J Holsti
4. **Hypothesis**

a) The benefit that Russia will get from helping Syria especially in Military, Economy and Political Sector

b) The supports that Russia gave to Syria as a form of the identity and consistency if Russia does not support Revolution and to keep Syria as one of its allies

## 5. Research Methodology

## 6. Structure of Writing

In **Chapter II**, it will describe:

1. The History of the relationship between Russia and Syria
2. The Similar Background of Russia and Syria
3. The Dynamic of the relationship between Russia and Syria

In **Chapter III** will describe:

1. The aid that has given from Russia to Syrian Civil War
2. Benefit that Russia will get from helping Syria especially in Military and Political sector
3. Benefit that Russia gets from helping Syria in the economy sector

In **Chapter IV** will describe:

1. Using The theory and the concept of analysis and prove the issue of this thesis

In **Chapter V** will tell about:

The conclusion that sums up the issue and analysis  
 in this thesis

