

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the issues, and the research question. The objective of the research is the intervention of Russia in the Syrian conflict through Astana Negotiations to reach peace in Syria under Putin's Administration. The research will respond to the research question by formulating a hypothesis based on the theoretical frameworks that have been selected. This proposal also includes the method of the research applied and the research outline.

A. Background

Russia in the era of Vladimir Putin's administration is known for back as a great and a powerful country once again. Since the power has regained back, Russia has been pursuing a foreign policy towards the Middle East, especially Syria. Although the power is not something can defined as a great power, Russia has been remarkably success on balancing its interest through the foreign policy (Katz, 2017). In this case, Russia sincerely hope that its foreign policy can strengthen the relationship between Russia and Syria and can mutually reach the national interest of each countries. Meanwhile, everything was seems smoothly happened, things change and Russia somehow getting insecure about its interest condition when in 2011, the Syrian conflict (Syrian Crisis) happened.

Syrian conflict (small Syrian Civil War) began in March 2011 alongside a string of revolutions in the Middle East, known as the Arab Springs. Unrest in Syria began when the civilians in the Syrian town of Dara'a, the Southern City was shot down by the security force for demanding release of the political prisoners. Initially, what happened in Syria was only

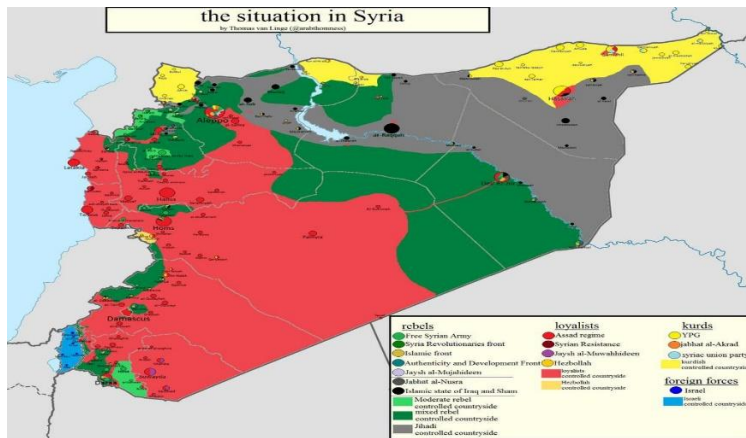
the annoyance that arose in society because of the high number of unemployment, the spread of corruption, and the lack of political freedom under Bashar al-Assad's administration (BBC, 2018).

Then, what really started the conflict in Syria was when President Al-Assad sent a deadly force to stop differences of opinion that ultimately sparked a national demonstration demanding the resignation of President Al-Assad from his position. As violence escalated in Syria, supporters of the opposition began to take up arms on the grounds; to drive out the attacking military in their area as well as the reason to protect themselves from government supporters. From this on, President Al-Assad swears to himself that he will punish any kind of threat that supported by other states. The increasingly widespread violence in Syria has led to the emergence of civil war within Syria, between opposition groups and government support groups. The heat of the civil war in Syria began when the superpower states gave financial, military and political support for both the government groups and the opposition groups, and this thing led Syria to become the next battlefield for the proxy war that had long since ended (BBC, 2018).

The military forces continued to fight the civilians through the summer of 2011, as they tried to crack down the demonstrations, thousands of regime soldiers began to break away from governments to launch an attack against them. As the opposition grew stronger, the United Nations had warned Syria that this will led them to a civil war and they called for immediate action.

In addition, there are jihadist groups that control most of the northwest region, while the ISIS group can seize control of the northeastern region of Syria. However, the ISIS could only control some territories due to the group's dismantling of its territory by Russian-backed Syrian

government forces, Turkey-backed rebel brigades, and an alliance of US-backed Kurdish militias (BBC, 2018).



1. 1 Situation Map in Syria

Source:

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/images/map-syria-2014-01-18.jpg>

During the long-lasting conflict in Syria, Russia that led by President Vladimir Putin began to provide assistance to Syria, even Putin told Al-Assad "Russia will continue to provide assistance to Syria in protecting state sovereignty, territorial integrity and integrity, in promoting the process of political settlement, and also to restore the national economy". In early December 2017, Putin decided to withdraw some of Russia's existing military in Syria back to his homeland, but he said that Russia would soon put its air base, Hmeymim, in the Latakia province of Syria and its naval facilities at Tartous "permanently" (Dwinanda, 2017).

With the help and support given by Russia to President Al Assad, this raises assumptions such as: 'Is Russia rescuing

president Al-Assad?' or 'Does Russia want to fight against ISIS?' These things are very hard to argue with. However, according to the BBC, the strong reason behind Russia helped Syria return when the Soviet Union gained influence in Syria in the 1970s, giving aids and arms (Rahman-Jones, 2017).

One year after the Syrian Crisis started in 2011, the talks about finding a solution on how to save Syria were started in Geneva under the aegis of the United Nations which known as the Geneva Peace Talks. So far, the Geneva Peace Talks has produced eight rounds (Pawlak, 2017), where Russia and the United States were the major players in the talks followed by Iraq, Turkey, United Kingdom, Arab League, Kuwait, China, European Union, and Qatar as the participants of the talks. The result of the eight rounds of talks was precluded as a positive outcome which the Assad regime and anti-regime forces to agree mutually acceptable solutions reluctantly (al-Badawi, 2017).

Meanwhile, at the beginning of January 2017, another process on to save Syria emerged that focused on attaining the cessation of hostility, rather than on finding political solutions. The process was led by Russia, Turkey and Iraq. The process took a place in Astana, Kazakhstan which is later named as Astana Peace Talks/ Astana Negotiations. Even though the peace talks were placed in Astana, Kazakhstan has no direct stakes in the crisis itself. In addition, in the first round of Astana Peace Talks, Kazakhstan had made it clear that it only provides the platform or place for the negotiation talks and it will not get involved in the peace talks (Nurshayeva, 2017), it is similar to earlier in 2015 where Kazakhstan hosted the talks between Syrian opposition, but as the President of Kazakhstan said that they are willing to send their peacekeeper troops if the United Nations told them so (Nazarbayev, 2017).

Astana Peace Talks or Astana Negotiations were initiated when the Geneva Talks proved that it was unable to give and achieve the political solutions after the end of the third round

because the opposition demanded a ceasefire and a stop to the advance being made by Syrian government and Russian forces towards Aleppo as a pre-condition for further participation in talks (Rocha, Julio, & Machry, 2016). The differences between Geneva Talks and Astana Talks are that Geneva Talks were guarded by the United States and some other western countries, while Astana Talks were symbolizing the geopolitical shift that led and guaranteed by Russia, Iraq, and Turkey (Porter, 2016).

B. Research Question

Based on the background of the research, the thesis mainly will be focused on addressing the research question as follows:

“Why does Russia intervene in Syria Crisis through Astana Negotiations?”

C. Theoretical Framework

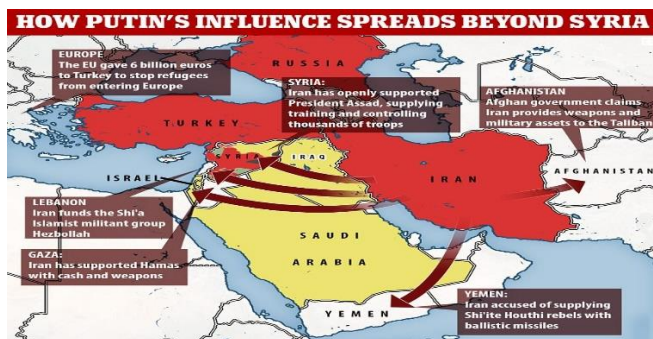
In the thesis, the researcher has selected a theory that will help to addressing the research question that has been proposed which is Humanitarian Intervention. Humanitarian Intervention is military force intervention that aiming to stop a fight or a war among states or some conflicting groups with the purpose to save the people in that country from the violation of human rights, such as providing a necessary security, providing foods to feed the starving people, halting a genocide or ethnic cleansing, and other similar purposes (Viotti & Kauppi, 2010, p. 419).

Based on the International Relations Theory Book (Viotti & Kauppi, 2010, pp. 420-421), Humanitarian Intervention

Theory have a several competing factors by policymakers; Sovereignty, National Interest, and Human Rights.

a. Sovereignty

According to International Law, there are no sovereign states that can intervene in domestic affairs of other sovereign state otherwise it get requested by the legitimate government of the conflicted state. However, according to UN Charter for collective security, using a military force (including the armed forces) is allowed as long as it is needed and the possibility of it can endangered the international peace and security. Basically, self-defense is needed in responding the aggression against a sovereign state.



1. 2 *Russia's Alliances in Syria*

Source:

https://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/newpix/2018/04/04/17/4AD2BF5F0000578-5577929-image-a-25_1522859377330.jpg

With the demands of the opposition for a new talks (agreement), after looking at the Geneva Peace Talks that was led by the United States had been failed to accomplish their aims to end the Syrian Civil War, a new talks or agreement later was formed in the late of

2016 named Astana Negotiations. The Astana Negotiations which held in the Astana, Kazakhstan led by 3 sovereign countries; Russia, Turkey –a key backer of the rebel group–, and Iran –Syrian Government’s strongest allies– (Tahhan & Collins, 2017).

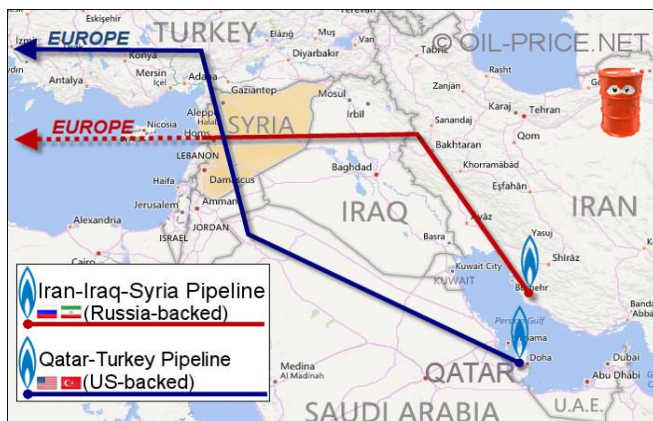
b. National Interest

Intervention is argued that it must be done when there is a vital national interest to be protected or to be reached. However, when one consider it as the decisive criteria, the truth is that there is no particular way to escape from the practical difficulty to trying to define what national interest is. National Interest is a subject that has multiple interpretations, but it does not mean that all interventions taken are because of national interest and the reason to make an acts of aggression.

According to Thomas W. Robinson, National Interest can be classified as six classification of interest, which is: 1. The Primary Interest, such as political and cultural identity; 2. Secondary Interest, such as protection of the citizens abroad and ensuring diplomatic immunities for the diplomatic staff; 3. Permanent Interest, such as long-term interests of the state; 4. Variable Interest, such as the cross currents of personalities, public opinion, sectional interests, partisan politics and political and moral folkways; 5. The General Interest, such as economic interest, trade interest, diplomatic relations; 6. Specific Interest, this is the logical outgrowths of the general interests and this is defined in terms of time and space (Sharma & Sharma, 2000).

The Russia involvement in Syrian Crisis (Civil War) is one of the reasons behind the current state of Russia’s relationships in the Middle East. Syria was one

of the closest allies of Russia since the Cold War, so it is kind of understandable for Syria's Government to ask for Russia's help on ending the Syria Crisis (Pakhomov, 2015).



1. 3 Russian Pipeline

Source: <http://www.oil-price.net/cartoons/russian-gas-pipelines.jpg>

While in its economic interest, Russia wants to keep in touch with Syria by helping because Russia do not want to lose all of its energy (oil and gas) investment and its valuable military contract with Syria (Michael, 2016). In fact, Syria is known as the biggest consumer of Russia weaponry and as a country where Russia's energy (oil and gas) have been investing. So, if anything happened in Assad administration or anything change in Syria governance, for sure it will cost a very bad impact for Russia's economy.

Aside of that, Russia is also known as one of the country that give an aid to Syria. As an example, in January 2016 Russia delivered 22 tons of humanitarian aid to several cities in Syria (Ruptly, 2016). In

February 2016, Syrian military transport together with the support of Russian fighter Su-30 brought another humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of the militant city of Deir ez-Zor. The total of humanitarian aid that was given by Russian were around 50 tons or more (Ruptly, 2016).

c. Human Rights

In the last half of twentieth century, human beings have rights that may supersede those claimed by the sovereign state. The groundwork was laid by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the UNGA in 1948. When such human rights violations are endangering the international peace and security, there is a legal way to solve this under the UN Security Council auspices.

D. Hypothesis

Russian Intervention towards Syria Crisis through Astana Negotiation is influenced by these factors:

1. Through the Astana Negotiations, the sovereignty interest of Russia in Syria crisis will be reach through de-escalation zone and a military forces that focused on eliminating the terrorist movement from Russia and Syria.
2. Through the Astana Negotiations and the humanitarian aids that have been given to Syria, Russia hope it will help to improve the relationship between Russia and Syria, especially in its economic interest; military contract and energy (natural gas and oil) investments.

E. Research Method

This research will use the descriptive methodology. It is defined by Sugiyono (2003, p. 11) that descriptive research is the research that is done to know the independent variable value, one variable or more without making a comparison or connection with other values. In addition, the descriptive methodology used is the descriptive-qualitative methodology. A descriptive qualitative method is a part of qualitative research. This method can be defined as descriptive research and tends to use inductive analysis approach. The aim of this method is to collect detailed information, identify problems, make comparisons or evaluations as well as uncover the facts, phenomenon, variables, and circumstances occurred when the research is conducted.

The qualitative research method is a method that cannot be measured using numbers, statistics, or matters relating to the exact, but it is a research which is formed by the words, scheme, and pictures (Sugiyono, 2003, p. 14). Qualitative research method seeks for a depth understanding of why and how the phenomenon can occur.

This research employs a secondary accumulation method. Secondary accumulation method is a technique which is chosen by the author to find the reference from literature, journal, e-book, books, and newspaper. According to Arikunto (2006, p. 158) documentation is finding and collecting the data about the thing which is formed through notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, notations, agendas, and etc. The other information is from the internet or electronic media which is relevant to the research.

In this case, the qualitative-descriptive method is used to consider the actions that will affect the subject according to the researcher point of view. This method is subjective regardless of trying to be as objectively as possible. Qualitative-descriptive methods try to find out what cannot be measured quantitatively and require an understanding. Thus, the qualitative-descriptive

method let the researcher to provide subjectivity regarding a social phenomenon such as social structure that has a lot of impact on human life. However, the subjectivity of the researcher must be based on concepts, theories, as well as data and facts that are in accordance with the actual conditions so that an objective explanation can be built.

F. Research Purpose

1. Objective Purpose

The study was conducted by the researcher to explain about the Astana Negotiations. This thesis aiming to find out and analyze the reasons behind Russia intervention in Syria through the Astana Peace Talks. Aside of that, this thesis also aiming to analyze the difference between the Geneva Peace Talks and the Astana Peace Talks, as well as explaining the result and transition period of the previous peace talks to the latest peace talks.

2. Subjective Purpose

In addition to the objective purpose, the researcher found out that this research is worth to explore, because this topic is interesting to be explored more since it also a new topic to be discuss. Furthermore, this research is also conducted by the researcher as one of the final requirements for the researcher to complete the study of undergraduate and to achieve the degree of S.IP (Bachelor of Political Science) in the university.

G. Scope of Research

To make the research of this thesis more specific, the writer decided to limit the research by focusing on find out Russia's intervention in Syria Crisis through Astana Negotiations in 2017, including the factors and the reasons Russia's decision on doing intervention towards Syria. The reasons researcher only chose the Astana Negotiations in 2017 is due to it is the latest peace talks where the talks is expected to be succeed on achieving peace in Syria after several previous negotiations had failed to reach its aim. However, to conduct the analysis properly, the research will using the Humanitarian Intervention Theory as the perspective.

H. Outline

In writing this research into a final paper, the writer of this thesis divides the thesis into 5 (five) chapters, in which each chapter is interrelated.

The first chapter contains an introduction part of the thesis which later will be divided into background, research question, theory, hypothesis, research purposes, research method, the range of research, and the writing system.

The second chapter contains an explanation about the relationship between Russia and Syria. This chapter will be divided into three parts; the history of Russia and Syria relationship, Russia foreign policy towards the Middle East, and Russia foreign policy towards Syria.

The third chapter contains the explanation about the Syrian Peace Process. This chapter will mainly talk about the Geneva

Peace Talks and the Astana Peace Talks along with its round of meetings.

The fourth chapter contains the factors and the reasons behind Russia involvement in the Syria Crisis. This chapter will mainly talking about the sovereignty interest and economic interest of Russia which need to be reached.

The last chapter, the fifth chapter, contains the conclusion of this thesis. This chapter will be embracing every main point from the first chapter until the fourth chapter.