

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RUSSIA'S INTEREST TOWARDS SYRIA CRISIS**

In this chapter, the writer would like to analyze the main issue of this thesis which is the reason behind Russia involvement in Syrian Civil War through Astana Negotiations as a Conflict Resolutions in 2017 by using the Humanitarian Intervention Theory. For the prolonged crisis that happened in Syria which got much attention from the world, the writer thinks it is necessary to find out the reason why this civil war/ crisis could happen and causing much death for the Syrian citizens. It is also necessary to find out the solutions for this crisis through an ongoing Peace Talks on Syria Crisis. As it is known that the Peace Talks that have been doing by several international actors such as Russia Federation do not come for free, there must be some interest it has in Syria, and it will give an adverse impact for it if the crisis in Syria does not put to an end. However, for some political actors, the act done by Russia Federation is a normal thing to do since it was known that the relationship between Russia and Syria has been running for years since the World War II. This thesis believes, Russia helped Syria to put an end on the crisis through Astana Negotiations because of its relationship has since the Post-Cold War; security interest and economic interest in Syria.

#### **A. Russia's Sovereignty Interest on Syria Crisis.**

Sovereignty Interest of Russia in Syria crisis will be reached through de-escalation zone that had been agreed upon the Astana Negotiations on May 2017 by the three guarantor states. De-escalation zone was a term that rarely used throughout the conflict, either it is international conflict, not

domestic conflict, but the memorandum that has been signed by the guarantor states (Russia, Turkey, and Iran) could be defined as an area where all the hostilities between the conflicted parties should be ceased. The memorandum contains banning both the Syrian Government and the Syrian Opposition from using any kinds of weapons in the area. It also orders rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access and restoring the public services such as electricity and water (TRTWorld, 2017 ).



4. 1 Russian generals attend a briefing in the Defense Ministry in Moscow, Russia, Friday, May 5, 2017.

Source: <https://a57.foxnews.com/foxnews-image.com/>

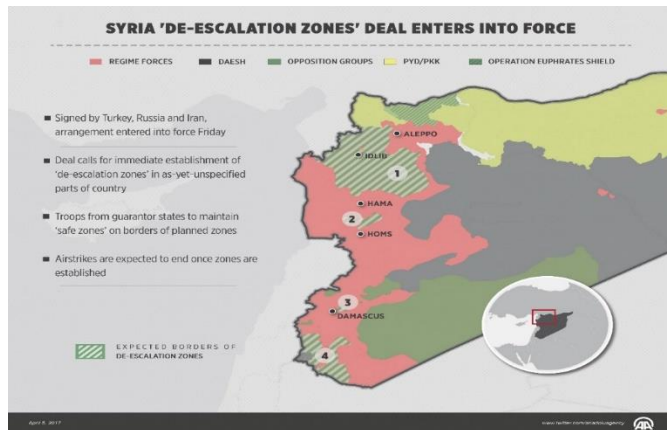
There are four of de-escalation zones that have been agreed by the guarantor states in Syria, it was:

**1st zone:** This zone is the largest one. It covers Idlib province as well as northeastern areas of Latakia province, western areas of Aleppo province and northern areas of Hama Province.

**2nd zone:** This zone includes the Rastan and Talbiseh enclave in northern Homs province. More than 150,000 civilians live in this area.

**3rd zone:** This zone covers Eastern Ghouta in the northern Damascus countryside, where a little less than 700,000 people are living. This area excludes the regime-besieged area of Qaboun. Russian Defence Ministry official Lieutenant-General Sergei Rudskoi said this was because Qaboun contained the al-Qaeda-linked group formerly known as the Nusra Front.

**4th zone:** This zone covers the opposition-held south along Syria's border with Jordan. It includes parts of Deraa and Quneitra provinces in which about 800,000 civilians are living.



#### 4. 2 Maps of The De-escalation Zones of Syria

Source: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/understanding-syrias-new-de-escalation-zones/227663/>

The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, stated that the guarantor states will take anything at cost to solve the problems

of Syria Crisis through the Astana Peace Talks/Astana Negotiations, and one of it was creating a de-escalation zone to four cities in Syria. However, even though the de-escalation zones almost the same with the safe zones –the term that is widely used in conflict to define a physical place where people can feel safe–, but de-escalation still lack from the protective framework. Even though the memorandum said the zones would be cleared from any ceasefire, there is no guarantee that it will stay like that if there are other Syria Opposition Groups that are not part of the ceasefire and it also allows the guarantors to fight against the militant group from both within and outside the designated areas (TRTWorld, 2017 ).

The plan of this de-escalation zones was mainly the reason for Russia to free up the Syrian Military from that areas and need to be focused more and can be deployed to the eastern and southern Syria. It is done so that the Syrian military can eliminate the terrorist activity that somehow also can be a threat for Russia Federation, prevent the Israeli and Jordanian forces to splitting the southern and the southwestern parts of Syria, and prevent the United States to splitting the eastern part (Turbeville, 2017).

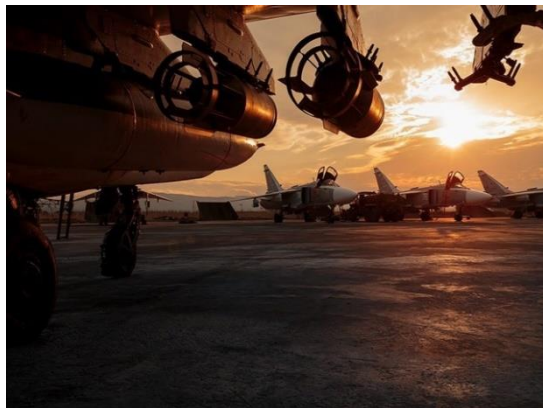
In addition, the important thing was the de-escalation zones appeared to be an attempt to free up the Syrian Military from the zones and fight and retake Deir-ez-Zour –one of the largest city in Syria–. Moreover, it also announces by the Russia Federation that it will help the Syria Military Forces to fight and retake Deir ez-Zour by participating in the military operation by Syria (Turbeville, 2017).

## **B. Economic Interest of Russia in Syria Crisis**

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. In fact, Syria was one of the closest allies of Russia since the Post-Cold War, so it is understandable for Syria's Government to ask for Russia's help on to end the Syria Crisis (Pakhomov, 2015).

The relationship that had been established since the Post-Cold War produced a lot of cooperation between Russia and Syria, where one of them happened in the economic aspect, which in the end Syria becomes one of the countries where the economic interest of Russia was laid on. It is proven by the fact that Russia wants to keep in touch by helping Syria out because Russia does not want to lose any economic interest; military contract and energy investments, in Syria (Michael, 2016). If anything could happen, the last thing Russia wants is the collapsed of Syria or the prolonged crisis in Syria. It was known very well, that Syrian is one of countries and allies of Russia being the biggest consumer of Russia weaponry and a state where Russia's energy (oil and natural gas) have been investing. So, the world can ensure that if anything could happen towards Syria, the last thing Russia wish is the collapsed of the Syrian government, because it can really damage the economy of Russia quite bad.



*4. 3 Syria's Aircraft*

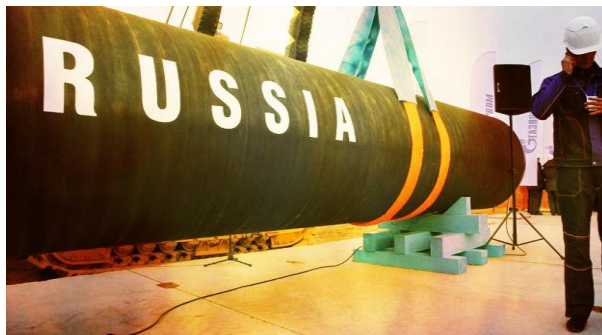
Source: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/understanding-syrias-new-de-escalation-zones/227663/>

According to The Moscow Times, in 2011, Russia had a substantial arms trade with Syria, and it was nearly \$20 billion of investment projects. These projects are aiming to cover infrastructure, energy, nuclear power plant, and tourism. While according to the Russian State Agency, Russia had such profitable military contracts with the Syrian Government (Assad regime) that worth to \$4 billion. They include MiG-29 fighters, Pantsir missiles, artillery systems, and several anti-tank weaponry. Moreover, it was once again that Syria is the biggest consumer of Russia weaponry systems, even since the Soviet Union era (Michael, 2016).

Between 2007 and 2012, Russia has accounted for 78 percent of Syria's weapons purchased according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Russia successfully sold its arms to Syria for \$4.7 billion in 2007-2010. In 2008, it was recorded that Syria ordered more modern weaponry systems to Russia, and it was agreed to purchase MiG-29SMT, Pantsir air-defence system, tactical missile systems, Yak-130 aircraft, and two Amur-1650 submarines. Because of the purchase of arms equipment, Damascus is known as one of the biggest clients in Syria against Russia (Michael, 2016).

Russia's export to Syria was worth \$1.1 billion. Russian Sroytransgaz was building a natural gas processing plant 200 kilometers in the Al-Raqqa region and the company was involved in technical support for the construction of the Arab Gas Pipeline. Sroytransgaz is belonged exclusively to Putin's close friend, a wealthy Russian businessman Gennady Timchenko. The Rufabula website stated that the company Sroytransgaz has been operating in Syria since 2000, and it has at least four projects there. The Russian company has got a contract for construction of the Arab Gas Pipeline length of 319

km and a gas processing plant №1 (South Middle Area Gas Exploitation Project (Michael, 2016).



#### *4.4 Russia's Pipeline in Syria*

Source: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/understanding-syrias-new-de-escalation-zones/227663/>

A source said that the HESCO Company has oil and gas infrastructure over 15 years in everywhere it is the subcontractor of the Russian Stroytransgaz, such as Syria, Sudan, Algeria, and the United Arab Emirates (Michael, 2016).

Russian company operates as well the “Northern Project,” the second gas refinery, designed for production and processing of five gas fields to the south-east of Raqqa, and the gas pipeline between Aleppo, Homs, and Idlib. There are four facilities in total. The first of them is under the control of the Assad regime in Homs. Two others now are in the territory controlled by ISIS. However, the pipeline also passes through the territory controlled by the moderate Syrian opposition, although the final point is controlled by the government.

It seems that the facilities located on the ISIS-controlled territory have been operating despite the bloody war. Moreover, they are still being operated by HESCO (which results in Stroytransgaz). Of course, in order to continue to operate, they had to “negotiate” with ISIS. Moreover, of course, they had to pay off this move (Michael, 2016).

It needs to be mentioned about Tatneft, an energy firm that was very well-known of Russia in Syria. This company began to pump Syrian oil through a joint venture with the Syrian national oil company in 2010. Tatneft planned to spend \$12 million on exploratory wells in Syria close to the Iraqi border. Russian TMK, ITERA, and national carrier Aeroflot also know had business interests in Syria.

It is quite obvious that Russian companies in Syria are losing assets and profit as a result of the war. Russia is decided to avoid Syria-Libyan state of affairs in which NATO forces helped rebels to topple Moammar Gadhafi. Russia lost there an estimated \$10 billion of contracts with Gadhafi’s regime, according to Russian media (Michael, 2016).

However, Syria itself is not a big player in the world gas and oil market. Even in the early 2000s, Syria was producing a little more than 520,000 barrels of oil per day, which makes roughly 0.6 percent of the world’s total production. Gas production in Syria was also not that large on a global scale; it was about 9 billion cubic meters per year in 2010. So, the crisis does not have any crucial impact on the world’s oil and gas market. It leads us to the next point.

Next, Russia tries to defend its gas export in Syria, preventing a potential competing pipeline. Some observers report that several Europe and Middle East countries desired a Qatari pipeline project that would connect the gas and oil fields of Qatar and crossing Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and Turkey before making its way to Europe countries.



Such a pipeline would lead to a substantial reduction in the amount of gas that Europe is buying from Russia. With the development of the Qatari pipeline, Europe would not depend so much on Russian gas and, therefore, would not fear a new gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Europe's concerns that its gas market may be held hostage to Russian gas giant Gazprom create tensions and push EU countries to look for diversifications of energy supplies. Indeed, a Qatari pipeline would be a disaster for Russia as it has a vital interest in controlling gas supplies to Europe, where Gazprom sells 80 percent of its gas (Michael, 2016).

Qatar has invested heavily in liquefied natural gas plants and terminals that enable it to ship its gas in tankers to the world's consumers. However, liquefaction and shipping increase total costs and Qatari gas has lost in European markets to cheaper pipeline gas from Russia, according to Foreign Affairs (Michael, 2016).

That is why, in 2009, Qatar proposed to build a pipeline to send its gas northwest via Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria to Turkey, suggesting an investment of billions of dollars. When asked for their agreement, Syrian President Bashar al Assad refused to sign the plan because he wanted to "protect the interests of its Russian ally," which is Europe's top supplier of natural gas.

After rejecting the offer, Syria signed the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline that would carry Iranian gas from the Persian Gulf through Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon and then under the Mediterranean to Europe. This project is not directly beneficial to Russia's Gazprom, but the pipeline would be owned and operated by Russian allies with whom it can be easily negotiated. The announcement of the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline agreement came in 2011. The parties signed the documents in July 2012. Construction was planned to be completed in 2016,

but the civil war and chaos in Syria ruined these plans (Michael, 2016).

To sum up, the Russian military operation in Syria aims to protect the interest of Russia's economy, but in the short term do not promise any significant benefits. At the same time, it costs a lot of expenses. With a serious involvement in the war in Syria, Russia will face significant economic losses and domestic risks.

The Russian economy has been already painfully hit by low oil prices, inflation, trouble devaluation and western sanctions over Moscow's role in Ukraine conflict which is still going on. It also suffers a dramatic deterioration of Turkey-Russia's economic relations over the fall of a Russian warplane on Turkish-Syrian border (Michael, 2016).



#### *4. 5 Syrian Crisis*

Source: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/understanding-syrias-new-de-escalation-zones/227663/>

However, Russia was forced to intervene as the Assad regime suffered a disastrous blow in the spring and the summer of 2015 after losing the city of Idlib in northern Syria and several other regions. It might be the key factor which motivated Russia to get involved in the Syrian crisis. On the

other hand, Russia wanted to act before the international actors, and its allies make a no-fly zone over Syria, which could mean the end of the Assad regime.

Aside from that, Russia is also known as one of the countries that give aid to Syria. As an example, in January 2016, Russia delivered 22 tons of humanitarian aid to several cities in Syria (Two Syrian Cities Received Humanitarian Aid, 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).