

THESI ABSTRACT
**THE EMERGENCE OF RUSSIA-SYRIA-IRAQ-IRAN ALLIANCE IN SYRIAN
CONFLICT (1991-2015)**

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This research focuses on the emergence of Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran Alliance caused by common threat from United State of America (USA) hegemonies and anarchical international structure that stimulate insecurity. Under qualitative approach, this research mostly uses content analysis method. The result of this research shows that Russia has long history of diplomatic and economic relation towards Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The initiation of Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran alliance formulated since the Syrian Civil War emerges. The alliance point's of agreement is to gather, process, and analyze the information related to Middle East area and terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

Keyword: Alliance, Security, Russia

BACKGROUND

The Cold War between United State of America (USA) and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was ended with the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989. Many communist states within the USSR regions replaced its government with the noncommunist one and with the end of Cold War the security in European contingent became more stable. USSR officially ceased to exist on 31 December 1991 and like most of former Soviet republic Russia emerged as independence state (Vodovozov & Medvedkov, 2019) Russia became the vast country that adjacent with total of 16 countries include North Korea, China, Norway, Finland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Poland, Georgia, Mongolia, Latvia, Estonia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Lithuania. Since its independent the first president of Russia is Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin under his presidency Russia was conduct bilateral and multilateral relations with other country including countries in the Middle East namely Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The relation between independent Syria with Russia was started from the Pre-Soviet Russia. The relations were initiated with a secret agreement signed on February 10, 1946, just before Syria's declaration of independence. That agreement prescribed USSR diplomatic and political support for Syria in the international arena as well as Soviet military assistance for the foundation of that country's national army. Russian–Syrian relations have started after the collapse of the Soviets and Boris Yeltsin's accession to power following a low profile as a result of the new conjuncture. Later the relationship

with the Soviets was just a matter of formality. The former USSR's military and economic aid was no longer provided by its successor, i.e. Russia. However, the Russian Tartus submarine base still retained its existence and the Syrian army's military and strategic consultants continued to be Russian generals (Aghayev & Katman, 2012).

Relations between Russia and Iraq were generally part and parcel of their relations with the countries of the Third World and their national liberation movements, especially Arab nationalism, which was particularly important for Moscow for both historical and geostrategic reasons. At the same time, however, especially between 1958 and 1990, Soviet-Iraqi relations were characterized by certain special features, contrasting them with Soviet ties with other African-Asian nations and even some Arab Middle East states. Post-Soviet Russian foreign policy, including its relations with Iraq, has undergone substantial transformations since its inception in December 1991, up to the first months of 2001, and some of its goals and directions can now be discerned and analyzed. Its first and most striking feature, compared to the Soviet era, is its weakness. The country currently does not have a material basis for supporting its international stature and aspirations. Its population is less than 50% of the former Soviet population and as early as 1995, its Gross National Product (GNP) was already more than 10 times smaller than that of the United States. (Kreutz, 2001).

The end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988-89, the death of Khomeini in 1989 and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe led to what was arguably the most friendly decade ever in the relations between Russia and Iran. Moscow started to sell arms to Iran and agreed to complete the nuclear reactor in Bushehr. Moscow greatly appreciated that Tehran in the First Chechen War (1994-96) did not side with fellow Muslims, but expressed support for the Russian Federation's continued territorial integrity. Russia and Iran have also worked together to put an end to the five-year civil war in Tajik (1992-97) between the former communist allies of Moscow and a democratic / Islamist alliance on favorable terms for the former. Finally, both Moscow and Tehran supported the Taliban's Afghan forces (Katz, 2012).

The relation among Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran after Cold War continue until now in many dimension including in security and military. In 2015 as a respond to the conflict happened in Syrian-Iraq location emerge the alliance of four states Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran that reach agreement to cooperate in collecting information about the terrorist group known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) with further option of combat action to eradicate the terrorist group (CNN, 2015). ISIS declares its absorption of Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda-backed militant group in Syria. Baghdadi the self-proclaimed leader says his group will now be called the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In Iraq, Syria, and beyond, ISIS seeks to establish an Islamic state, called a caliphate. The group implements

Sharia law, which is rooted in Islam in the eighth century, to create a society which reflects the past of the region (CNN, 2019).

The alliance among Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran in 2015 is a new phenomenon because before this event the relation among Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran is in term of bilateral relations. The emergence of Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran Alliance is important to be examined because it can give a new insight in term of alliance studies. Therefore, related to the topic this thesis would like to examine the relation among Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran relation before the emergence of the alliance, their relation when the alliance formed, and the factors that caused the emergence of Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran alliance.

FACTORS THAT CAUSED ALLIANCE

A. Common Threat from USA Hegemony

Russian perspective in term of USA intervention in Middle East is that the action taken by the USA becomes threat because of its influence that create hegemony in Middle East that will later threaten the position of Russia. Russia has interest in Syria, Iraq, and Iran that pursued by Russia foreign policy toward those states. Russia diplomatic and economic relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran was establish since 90s and since then Russia always maintain the adequate relation with each of them. If the intervention from USA spread throughout Middle East especially that states it will be a threat to the existence of Russia relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

USA is a prominent international actor in many cases including in the case that destabilize regional security with high international tension one of them happened in Middle East. USA can be called as a prominent actor because several important capabilities that it possessed. Officially, USA has over 190,000 soldiers and 115,000 civilian staff in 46 nations and territories is massed in 909 military installations. There, the U.S. military owns or leases 795,000 acres of property, and \$146 billion worth of 26,000 buildings and structures. However, these formal figures do not include other installations as to the scale of U.S. foreign military basing, excluding the huge presence of buildings and troops in Iraq and

Afghanistan over the past several years, as well as secret or unrecognized installations in Israel, Kuwait, the Philippines and many other locations (Lutz, 2009). From the information above it can be measured how big the influence of USA toward the world reflected by their capability in security and arms.

Although it mainly as the facility for defensive security but in the perspective of other state the capability that possessed by the USA can be seen as the offensive rather than defensive capabilities. According to the Theory of Alliance by Stephen M. Walt once of the factor that lead the states to alliance with each other is the level of threat that posed by single state and one of the possible threat is offensive capability (Walt, 1987).

According to the M. Waltz other factor that can be seen as threat is perceived intentions from one state. How is their intention determine their action in this case determine their foreign policy (Walt, 1987). According to the Robinson there is statement that under the rubric of "encouraging democracy," the USA intervened in the crises, transitions, and energy vacuums that resulted from the break-up of the outdated order to attempt to affect their result (Robinson, 1996). USA intervention of "encouraging democracy" can be proven was happened in the Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

Intervention that conducted by USA toward Syria, Iraq, and Iran are proven by the data. U.S intervention to Syria in 2011 when President Barack Obama officially called on Assad to step down "for the sake of the individuals of Syria" and in August 2011 issued fresh sanctions against his government and continued in 2012 issued chemical weapons used by the government. In comments to White House journalists, Obama advised Assad's regime not to use chemical weapons, describing it as a "red line" for his administration that might prompt U.S. military intervention.

Later in 2013 The Obama administration reported in reaction to the chemical weapons attack that the president was considering military intervention in Syria as "restricted." Obama said he wished Congress to authorize the attack, stating he was "meaning I'm the president of the oldest constitutional democracy in the world." But some leaders of both sides in Congress, particularly the House, were skeptical about the proposal to take military action. Obama requested lawmakers later in the year of 2014 to approve his plan to arm and train insurgents in Syria to battle the region's Islamic State for the United States. With bipartisan support, Congress approved it (Conway, 2017).

During the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, the U.S. initially provided non-lethal aid (including food rations and pick-up trucks) to the Free

Syrian Army rebels, but quickly started providing training, money and intelligence to selected Syrian rebel commanders. Two U.S. programs were trying to help the Syrian rebels. One was a 2014 Pentagon program planning to train and equip 15,000 militants to battle ISIS, canceled in 2015 after spending \$500 million and generating just a few tens of combatants (Mazzetti, Goldman, & Schmidt, 2017).

USA intervention to Iraq is reflected in Iraq's invasion of 2003 it was the Iraq War's first phase. The stage of the invasion started on March 19, 2003. The war's early phase officially finished at the time of the U.S. on May 1, 2003. President George W. Bush proclaimed the "end of significant fighting activities" after the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) as the first of several consecutive transitional governments leading up to the first Iraqi parliamentary election in January 2005. (Michael & Bernard, 1995).

President Clinton imposes petroleum and trade penalties on Iran in 1995 for supposed "terrorism" patronage, attempting to obtain nuclear weapons and hostility to the peace process in the Middle East. U.S. in 2002 to 2003 In his State of the Union address, President George W Bush defines Iran as part of an "axis of evil." The U.S. accuses Iran of attempting to create a secret program of nuclear weapons and refuses to exclude the "military alternative" in dealing with Iran. By budgeting \$3 million for different Iranian organizations, the United States is publicly trying to

"foster democracy" in Iran in 2005 through 2006. Iran's UN ambassador called the plan a "clear violation" of a 1981 U.S.-Iranian agreement in which the U.S. promised "not to intervene directly or indirectly, politically or militarily in the internal affairs of Iran." (Willems, 2012).

Russia has established a long-lasting diplomatic relation with Syria since 1946 and become each other supporter in international community. Tartus become the naval base for Russia that has important role in determining Russia position in Middle East (Allison, 2013). In economic relation Russia also has agreement on energy industry including oil and gas. In the tension of Syrian Civil War the activity mainly freeze and stop but there will be further pre-war agreement that will be continue with the valued of minimum \$1.6 billion (Sogoloff, 2017).

Russia and Iraq relation never always been well but since the end of Second World War their relation recover and move toward better direction. Their diplomatic ties restored since Iraqi began buying weapon from Russia and since then their relation became close and multifaceted. Because of this their relation often time called by "strategic partnership" (Smolansky & Smolansky, 1981). In economic sector Russia has considerably large companies that operated in Iraq for example like LUKoil and Gazprom. This companies and energy business is vital for Russia economy because event in 2000 all order from Iraq to Russia surpassed

\$20 billion US dollar (Kreutz, 2001) also the turnover of product with that nation accounting for 60% of with all Arab countries (Kreutz, 2007).

Russia and Iran relation in the time when Russia still Uni Soviet was uncomfortable and often turbulent because of the expansionist policy from Uni Soviet that threat Iran. Since the collapse of Uni Soviet the relation between Russia and Iran become more peaceful and less hostile (Sicker, 1988). Russia's foreign willingness to have a friendly neighbor to the Muslim nations in Central Asia, and Iran's need for Russian weapons, fresh techniques, and perhaps more importantly, national and global political support create a boundary for their relations (Herrmann, 1994). Big Russian companies also doing business in Iran such as LUKoil and Gazprom and the energy business in Iran continue to expand (Kozhanov, 2012).

USA occupation of many military base surrounding Middle East and capability in military and security that superior compared by other state in Middle East also the behavior of intervention create a common threat for Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran according to Theory of Alliance from M. Waltz. The Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran Alliance emerged as a balancing toward USA threat so that USA will not have a total control. Each state from Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran Alliance cannot let the USA take total control because they are following logic that single powerful power

or hegemonic power tend to corrupt massively and using the power to abuse the powerless instead to establish order (Walt, 1987).

B. Anarchical Structure That Caused Insecurity

Anarchical structure in international relation comes from the Theory of Structural Realism by Kenneth Waltz. According to Kenneth Waltz the conflict in Middle East that triggered the emergence of ISIS that destabilize the territorial security is because there is no central authority and this is the fundamental form of international system. It also means that there are no super and subordination because of the absence of agent with system-wide authority (Waltz, 2010).

Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran as self-reliance unit coactions form the international and political system, such as economic market concept. The coexistence of these states creates structure and no state intends to take part in the formation of structure that constrains the units. Controlling action from units such as intervention from U.S. will produce the reaction of resistance from the unit that being constrained (Waltz, 2010).

The States are the units of their core functions in international political systems other than cultural, ideological, constitutional or personal divergences; they perform the same basic tasks like collecting tax, conducting their foreign policy, and keeping their security under control. Anarchic system units are

undifferentiated functionally. In this case, the units of this order are mainly characterized by their greater or lower capacity to carry out the same task (Waltz, 2010).

Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran have a similar basic task like collecting tax, conducting foreign policy, and maintain their security even though they have different culture, ideology, and constitution they are still similar in the core as an units in international structure that anarchy. They have differences only in the capability to carry the basic task. It is natural for the lower capability to seek out other units to fulfill their needs and to cooperate with self-interest in mind.

In anarchical international structure the logic of state is self-help because there are no agent authorities that will help them and protect them. They have to ready for threat that can occur and ultimately keep survive. The emergence of ISIS in the midst of Syria Civil War creates the disturbance in the Syria-Iraqi territory.

ISIS declares its absorption of Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda-backed militant group in Syria. Baghdadi the self-proclaimed leader says his group will now be called the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, Syria, and beyond, ISIS seeks to establish an Islamic state, called a caliphate. The group implements Sharia law, which is rooted in Islam in the eighth century, to create a society which reflects the past of the region (CNN, 2019).

In August 2014, ISIS militants invaded a northern city in Iraq, home to the Yazidis, a religious minority group. Hundreds of individuals were murdered, females sold into slavery, forced religious conversions, and tens of thousands of Yazidis fled their homes. ISIS has gained worldwide recognition for heinous acts of abuse, including government executions, rapes, beheadings and crucifixions. The group has gained a nefarious reputation for recording and displaying violent murders online. ISIS has also assumed responsibility for hundreds of Middle East and worldwide terrorist attacks (History.com Editors, 2017).

The emergence of ISIS caused by the anarchical situation in the Middle East especially in Syria-Iraqi territory. The anarchical situation gave birth to the insecurity from each state about the situation. This is that triggered the formation of Russia-Syria-Iraq-Iran alliance. The mainly reason is not ISIS itself but the unstable security condition it creates that caused the Alliance to be formed. Because the unstable security can create many disadvantages in term of other sector like diplomatic and economic sector that is important for each states. The purpose alliance formation is to restore the security in order to make sure the survival of each alliance member in the anarchical international structure that demand every state to think about their self survival.

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