

Turkey's Foreign Policy Strategy Change in Syrian Crisis (2016-2017)

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Abstrak

Turki merupakan salah satu aktor penting yang perannya tidak dapat dipisahkan dalam memahami dinamika krisis Suriah. Turki melakukan intervensi di Suriah untuk mengganti rezim yang berkuasa dengan mendukung kelompok oposisi dan membangun aliansi dengan negara-negara barat. Turki mulai merubah strategi politik luar negerinya pada 2016, namun tetap mempertahankan kepentingannya berupa keamanan dan stabilitas. Tulisan ini bertujuan menjelaskan hubungan antara faktor-faktor penyebab dan perubahan strategi politik luar negeri Turki di Suriah. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah pendekatan pembuatan kebijakan luar negeri dan teori pembuatan kebijakan James Rosenau yang mencakup determinan seperti lingkungan internal, eksternal, penilaian informasi dan proses pembuatan kebijakan yang kemudian melahirkan output berupa kebijakan politik luar negeri. Temuan dalam tulisan ini menunjukkan faktor-faktor domestik dan internasional mendorong Turki merubah strategi politik luar negerinya. Adapun bentuk strategi tersebut adalah Turki berkolaborasi dengan Rusia dalam mengupayakan resolusi konflik dan mengakhiri konflik antara rezim Suriah dan kelompok oposisi.

Kata kunci: krisis Suriah, politik luar negeri, teori pembuatan kebijakan, perubahan strategi.

Abstract

Turkey is one of the significant actors whose roles cannot be ignored in understanding the dynamics of the Syrian crisis. Turkey used to interfere the neighboring country to remove the Syrian regime by backing the opposition groups and building alliance with the western countries. Turkey began to change its foreign policy strategy in Syria in 2016, but still maintained its domestic security and stability interest. This paper is aimed to explain the relationship between the driving factors and Turkey's foreign policy strategy change. This article applied the foreign policy decision-making approach where determinants were perceived and acted upon by the official governmental decision-makers. James Rosenau's decision-making theory was employed to strengthen the approach, consisting of some foreign policy determinants such as external environment, internal environment, information assessment and decision-making process which further affect decision-makers to make the state's foreign policy as the decision output. The finding showed that domestic and international factors encouraged Turkey to change its foreign policy strategy. The new strategy was the collaboration of Turkey and Russia in seeking the resolution to create stability within Syria and put an end of the severe conflict.

Keywords: Syrian crisis, foreign policy, decision-making process, strategy change.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed at explaining the change of Turkey's foreign policy strategy in the Syrian crisis. Understanding the behavior of a country in regional politics through a foreign policy analysis is necessary to discern the questions more comprehensively since the analysis may involve not only international but also domestic factors. It means the analysis will find out the interacting units which resulted in a foreign policy decision (Mas'ood, 1989). Turkey began to change its foreign policy strategy in Syrian crisis

two years ago. It encouraged the investigation of what caused Turkey to make such decision after its controversial involvement in the stalemated conflict. Furthermore, there are not yet any comprehensive or research-based sources providing the information as expected.

The beginning of Turkey engagement in Syrian domestic crisis in 2011 has been considered a determined regional actor was influencing the dynamics within the country and region. Turkey is one of the most active actors in

the Middle East and had deployed its resources in the conflict which then instigated criticisms from not only other countries but also home opposition parties. Turkey's stance against the Syrian regime raised after the government used chemical weapons to beat the opposition groups. Not only did Turkey assist the inception and organization of the opposition groups into Syrian National Council/Coalition (SNC) and Free Syria Army (FSA), it has also been hosting the two main Syrian opposition elements (Luerdi, 2015).

Expecting the regime change in Syria was an uncertain outcome for Turkey that both regional and extra-regional actors, which were Assad's allies in strengthening his presidency, extended their interests in the conflict as well. Since the conflict was the assemblage variety of interests, the conflict resolution was hardly achieved, or even to satisfy the conflicting parties and failed Turkey's ambition to remove the Syrian regime. Instead, the domestic conflict within Syria was intensifying with the emergence of more armed groups. Due to its foreign policy, Turkey harmed its diplomatic relationship with Russia especially after Turkish military shot down Russian aircraft near Turkey-Syria border (Kirici & Ekim, 2016). The worse thing was the conflict able to enter its territory.

The devastating crisis and complicated situation in Syria urged Turkey to reconsider its involvement. Turkey still needed to advocate its main interest even though it had to change the direction of its foreign policy. Turkey came to another practical strategy which was a result of some considerations, the combination of what it perceived the importance of domestic stability and the uncertain geopolitics in Syria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This article applied the approach of foreign policy making to answer the purposes designed. Foreign policy-making in the Middle East can only be adequately understood by analyzing of multiple factors common to all states such as foreign policy determinants to which decision-makers respond when they shape policies and foreign policy structures or processes. It is to identify which factor of the inputs made by various actors into a policy by addressing these determinants (Hinnebusch, 2013). Such determinants perceived and acted upon by the official government-

tal decision-makers. Only then could the determinants be considered to have affected foreign policy (Jensen, 1982).

This article applied the theory of foreign policy decision-making proposed by James Rosenau. Decision-making approach has been very useful since it provides frameworks of analysis in explaining foreign policy. It does not mean that there has been an established empirical theory of foreign policy decision-making, whether general or even partial due to the existence of different frameworks (Korany, 1986). James Rosenau's decision-making theory consists of some determinants such as the external environment, internal environment, information assessment and decision-making process which further affect decision-makers to make the state's decision or foreign policy as the output.

The internal environment referred to Turkey's domestic security and stability. Turkey's intervention in Syria brought the conflict to its domestic level. The armed group like the ISIS had been threatening Turkey's stability with bombing actions since the government decided to support the Syrian opposition groups to fight them in Syria. Besides, Turkey had to face the growing activities and the increasing power of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) which affiliated to Syrian Kurd group, called the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Northern Syria due to its political activism and opposition to the Kurd autonomous area of Syria. The Turkish government was just threatened by a coup plotted by Fethullah Gulen and his FETO organization whose purpose was the regime change in Turkey (Anadolu, 2016). Those internal factors mattered since they were able to threaten and disturb Turkey's home stability and security.

The external environment referred to external powers' stands on the Syrian crisis and Turkey's domestic politics. Russia was the main backer of Assad, playing its roles in rejecting the regime change in Syria by deploying its significant supports. Russia enjoyed its increasing influence in Syria, especially after the United States (US) withdrawal from the demand of Syrian regime change and growing a concern with the ISIS rather than the intervention against the regime. This policy was followed by the European Union (EU) which once rejected Turkey's no-flying zone demand in Syria (Pierini, 2016). The US supported the

PYD in fighting the ISIS which in turn, threatened Turkey's interest. Regarding Turkey's domestic politics aftermath the failed coup, both the US and the EU criticized Turkish government in responding to the coup, even they did not take a definitive stance against the coup plotters during the initial hours (Ataman & Shkurti, 2017).

Turkey had the capability of assessing the information of its international environment like what was happening in Syria and how the external power reacted to its domestic politics. Turkey realized the involvement of Russia in the crisis and the US and the EU hesitancy in toppling Assad from power. Turkey considered that both the latter did not prove a friendly policy after the coup. In contrast, Russia gave its support to the democratically elected government of Turkey in responding to the coup (Mankoff, 2016). Turkey also perceived Russia's foreign policy change in Syria from a direct intervention role to a mediation role (Reuters, 2016). Russia was engaging in promoting peace between the Syrian regime and opposition groups and fighting ISIS at the same time.

Decision-making means the process of Turkey's foreign policy decision making. The Turkish government had to take the best option by considering the internal and external environment. As a pragmatic and liberal actor, Turkey's government combined its liberal value for conflict resolution and the need for national security to result a new perspective of policy in Syria. Furthermore, Turkey still perceived itself as an important regional actor whose ambition and active foreign policy character was attached in its involvement.

The policy created by the process of decision-making was that Turkey changed its foreign policy strategy in Syria. Turkey's previous intervention to maintain its domestic stability and security from the PKK-PYD activities had been aimed at replacing the Syrian regime and promoting the Syrian opposition groups for the country's new leadership. The regime change in Syria was the prerequisite to ending the crisis, create stability in Syria and guarantee the domestic stability in Turkey (Luerdi, 2015). Whereas, the new form of policy was to engage with Russia in seeking the conflict resolution in which Turkey reduced its ambition to topple the regime. Russia was no longer seen as a rival but a partner for Turkey. The main purpose of this strat-

egy was still to provide stability within Syria which also meant stability within Turkey. This situation was expected to restrict the PKK-PYD, and ISIS' movements in Syria. Therefore, Turkey would be able to maintain its domestic order which meant security and stability at home. This strategy was implemented by Turkey to influence its future external environment.

METHODS

The qualitative approach was applied during the research, and the explanatory model of analysis which raising the independent and dependent variable was applied to support the approach. The research revealed that domestic and external factors faced by Turkey were the antecedence of the case studied; meanwhile, Turkey's foreign policy strategy change was the consequence. The technique applied in gathering data was the library research in which a variety of data containing relevant information were collected from books, journals, documents, and useful articles.

The interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman was applied to analyse the data. The model of data analysis consists of some activities: (1) data gathering/collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display and (4) verification or conclusion drawing. The analysis model is called an interactive model since a series of the activities intertwines before, during and after the data gathering in a parallel form to establish general knowledge called analysis, in other words, the data gathering activity and other three activities are included in the process of cycle and interaction (Idrus, 2009).

In this model, the researchers had better be ready to shift from one activity to the other, starting from the process of data gathering, data reduction, data display, and verification. Therefore, the analysis conducted was a series of process of activities which repeatedly and constantly occurred and the activities followed each other. The activities stopped after a complete report of the research was finished.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

FACTORS ENCOURAGING TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY CHANGE

Domestic Stability and Security

Turkey's national security interest was perceived as the protection of territorial integrity where stability as the ground was also the objective to reach. Domestic stability and security matter contributed to Turkey's foreign policy strategy change in Syrian crisis referring to internal situations which decision makers could not ignore. Such internal environment might have been seen the most considered things before others. While other factors undoubtedly strengthened the priority to meet the vital need in the domestic level. In this case, Turkey's internal stability and security were in trouble due to the growing influence of the PKK and PYD, the ISIS threat and the coup event that just threatened the ruling government as well as its domestic order.

For Turkey, domestic stability and security were requirements to continue its development and people prosperity. Turkish previous prime minister, Erdogan (2014) stated that Turkey achieved a series of good performances in terms of economy and military for more than one decade and the government was committed to continuing such prestige. Turkey realized such a thing could be maintained and increased only if domestic stability and security prevailed. As a country which enjoyed its rising power and its status as a rising regional actor, Turkey was encouraged to be an important regional power, especially in the Middle East. This ambition could be threatened by its domestic instability and insecurity regarding its intervention policy in Syria.

The Growing PKK-PYD and ISIS Threats

Turkey and the PKK were enduring a conflicting relationship since the PKK's inception in the 1970s. The Marxist-Leninist group kept championing its demand getting either independence or special autonomy for the southeastern territory of Turkey. From the government's perspective, none of its areas should be granted any special autonomy based on the particular nation since such a policy would bring the fractures within Turkey. As Erdogan declared (2014), all areas within the country could enjoy the

same rights, and all Turkish nationals were treated equally despite their nations. Consequently, Turkey kept maintaining its stance against the PKK.

The PKK was not only a local rebel group operating in Turkey but also an international organization which received sometime supports from foreign governments and other Kurd groups outside Turkey. Since Syrian regime withdrew its military forces from northern Syria, the PYD then became the most important and the powerful Kurd group in Syria. PYD was believed to be another PKK by the Turkish government as the PKK created the group to advocate the Kurds' interests in Syria. As a sister organization of the PKK, PYD was able to be a dominant faction within Syria's autonomous northern area because of the PKK's support. International Crisis Group recorded that PKK and PYD shared their fighters in which one-third of the PKK's militias were Syrian Kurds (Caves, 2012).

PYD enjoyed the growing of political and military influence within Syria, and its leadership was gaining popularity support from the Kurds. The PYD and PKK frequently warned Turkey not to intervene in Syria especially in the northern area which mainly conquered by the Kurd groups. The PYD together with its military wings People's Protection Unit (YPG) and Women's Protection Unit (YPJ) had effective military movements in resisting the Syrian opposition groups. Furthermore, the PYD was gaining the US' support to fight ISIS in Syria, which in return, damaging Turkey's security interest. On the other hand, SNC-FSA faced more difficulties due to their fight against not only Syrian regime forces along with foreign militias coming from Syria's allies but also the PYD and ISIS' fighters.

The PKK conducted several deadly attacks in Turkey even more frequently, especially in the areas near the Turkey-Syria border, because of its foreign policy in Syria. Turkey believed that the capability both the PYD-PKK could not be separated from the Syrian regime support. Syria's policy to grant autonomy to the Kurds was a counter-policy to resist Turkey's intervention as well as defending the area from the opposition groups (Luerdi, 2015). Besides, Turkey once declared the Syrian regime's involvement in PKK's attacks within its territory (Erdogan, 2014).

The ISIS was another actor who devastated Turkey's domestic stability. The group was able to conquer many of

areas in Syria and fight against all its enemies in the country. The ISIS already carried out several attacks targeting Turkey's facilities, citizens and foreigners and demanded the Turkish government to withdraw its support to SNC-FSA. Turkey previously blamed the ISIS for several deadly attacks which were resulted by the consequence of its involvement in Syria.

Compared to the situation before the crisis, the number of attacks was growing since Turkey intervened Syria. From early 2015 until early 2017, Aljazeera (Aljazeera, 2017) recorded the twenties of attacks harming both facilities and people. Turkey used to face the threats from the PKK such as bombs and abductions for decades (Mango, 2005); however, the PKK increased its attacks as retaliation for Turkish government's firm intervention against the Kurds' interest in Syria, and so did the ISIS.

Turkey realized that the risk of its domestic security and stability became the consequence for its foreign policy principle in Syria. The country seemed to be unable to block the conflict from entering its border. The devastating security and stability at home could be a bad image for Turkey as a regional actor and invite more criticisms from national opposing parties and its citizens. Thus, the Turkish government needed to reconsider its foreign policy in Syria.

Leaving Syria with a stalemated conflict was not a good choice either as Turkey consistently maintained its domestic interest for stability and security. The PKK and ISIS remained the threats for Turkey as the groups invested their political movements and influence within Syria. Turkey still believed that its intervention was necessary to create stability within Syria which then meant stability to the country as well. Therefore, the new form of Turkey's foreign policy strategy still purposively created stability. However, Turkey's new foreign policy strategy was to bring Russia as a partner in attempts for stability in Syria and decreased its regime problem rhetoric against the Syrian regime.

The Coup Event over the Turkish Government

Turkey had experienced a series of coup attempts, mostly successful, carried out by the military to topple the ruling regimes. The early coup attempt took place in 1960 to replace the regime which the military considered ac-

commodative to Islamists. The 1971 coup was in response to the increasing of left-wing groups and the effort to create stability where the military believed the ruling government was not capable of guaranteeing such public good.

Post-1980 coup, the military began to dominate the Turkish politics by restricting political rights of political parties and civilians. Turkish military became the supreme actor determining who could be elected to be leaders for the country. A few years later, military handed in the power to civilians and political parties; however, the military with its special rights still overshadowed Turkish home politics. In 1997, the military conducted another coup to remove the existing Islamist rulers whose views were considered the threat for the ideology of Kemalism and secularism (Alfian, 2015).

The Turkish government already put efforts to restrict the military intervention in domestic politics especially after the referendum of the constitutional amendment in 2010. Since then, the civilian government enjoyed such change and gained enough support from the military, especially in term of the government domestic policy against the PKK and foreign policy in Syria.

However, the government did not gain the support from the whole military institution which ended up with the 2016 coup attempt carried out by a faction in the military which the government believed to have a connection with the movement of Fethullah Gulen, a Pennsylvania-based cleric. Gulen had followers within Turkish institutions such as judiciary, military, police department and others. The coup was followed by the bombing attempt over the parliament building and kidnapping of joint chief of staff and caused 241 dead, and more than 2,194 were injured (Anadolu, 2016).

The coup was conducted amid Turkey's activism in the Syrian crisis and domestic threats from the PKK and ISIS. The coup attempt complicated the problem of the Turkish government had to accomplish. It meant the security and stability the country fought for were vulnerable from not only the PKK and ISIS but also any military faction at home. The government realized that to create domestic security and stability needed full support from the military institution. The military aid was also required by the Turkish government to extend its policy across the border

to face the PKK-PYD and ISIS.

For the Turkish government, the actors threatening Turkey could take advantages of the coup event. They could have thought that the policy makers within Turkey secured only little legitimacy due to partial support from its military where in the future they could set more attacks. The coup was celebrated by the Syrian regime supporters (Hindawi, 2016). The Turkish government detained a number of Kurdish politicians and activists who were considered being either involved in the coup or linked to the PKK in response to the coup attempt.

Such a situation encouraged Turkey to change its foreign policy strategy in Syria. Turkey's previous stance to demand the regime change in Syria did not work smoothly as expected. On the other hand, the domestic threat to its stability was increasing as the Syrian regime warned and expected when Turkey began its intervention. Turkey already directed its foreign policy to attract Russia to be an ally to facilitate conflict resolution within Syria. Stability within Syria was believed to contribute stability at home, or the Turkish government would be able to give more attention to tackle threats coming from within.

External Powers' Stands on Syrian Crisis and Turkey's Domestic Politics

Not only did Turkey consider its domestic situation seriously, but it also perceived international environment in the region which was able to influence the policy-making. Syria was the ground in which many international interests met, not only regional actors' but also extra-regional actors' preserving the endless conflict in the country. Turkey was one of the regional actors that earliest and most open who showed its opposition to the Syrian regime and propagated that the existing regime was the causing problem of the crisis (Kouskouvelis, 2013). Turkey's sharp regime problem rhetoric lasted until 2016 when the crisis was becoming more uncertain with the absence of the conflict resolution and, on the other hand, the Syrian regime was becoming more powerful with its allies' supports.

After a five-year intervention, Turkey could not gain the output of the decision makers had designed, replacing the Syrian regime with the Syrian opposition groups likely

able to control the stability and the Kurds within Syria. The balance of power presence between Russia and the US as well as the EU's reluctance to fully support the opposition groups incorporated in SNC-FSA became the main reason why Turkey's intervention did not work (Luerdi, 2015).

Besides the external powers' stands on the Syrian crisis, Turkey experienced different responses from those great powers regarding its domestic political situation post-2016 coup attempt. The Turkish government needed international supports so that the country could survive in the middle of domestic threats and regional uncertainty due to the Syrian crisis. Turkey had to calculate its foreign policy in Syria, encouraged by these external actors' roles both in the Syrian crisis and its domestic politics.

Russia's Role in Syrian Crisis and Its Stand on Turkey's Domestic Politics

Russia was an important ally for Syria, and therefore, it had significant contributions to the Syrian regime's survival. The country already supported the regime as the legitimate government of the Syrian people from the beginning of the crisis as Syria helped maintain its geostrategic interest in the Middle East. Many believed that Russia would not let Syria have the same fate as Libya whose regime was toppled by NATO (Express, 2017). Instead, it would be consistent in defending the regime from the foreign intervention as Syria was the only loyal ally left in the region.

Russia already carried out a series of roles to strengthen the position of the Syrian regime, both political and military. Russia showed its side to Syria in the United Nations Security Council's deliberations for the conflict resolutions and sanctions against the regime. Russia always condemned the international actors for blaming the regime for atrocities and used its veto to abort any decision made by the Security Council targeting the regime.

Russia was also active in conferences related to Syria such as Geneva Conferences, dialogues seeking for the best solution for the Syrian crisis sponsored by the United Nations and other countries including Turkey. While Turkey stood against the Syrian regime and was in favor of Syrian opposition groups' demand for the regime change

and creation of a transitional government in Syria, Russia took side with the regime rejecting any outsider intervention and preferring the solution determined by the Syrian people.

Russia kept exporting its weapons into Syria in spite of the ongoing conflict and international criticisms (Connolly & Sendstad, 2017). Furthermore, at the Syrian regime's request, Russia sent its military personnel along with aircraft to assist the regime against all of the rebel groups within the country, not only the ISIS but also the opposition forces. Russia and Syria had bombed the rebels' basis several times though the actions caused the civilian victims and were condemned by the United Nations as well as Turkey.

Turkey realized that Russia would not step back from backing the Syrian regime unless there was a significant change and its position would determine the dynamics of the conflict. Russia's intervention in Syria was becoming stronger compared to the earlier years of the conflict. The hardship which the opposition groups backed by Turkey faced was not easily removed as long as Russia stood with the Syrian regime. Moreover, the United Nations, along with its Security Council, was unable to stop Russia as its permanent member status.

Instead of seeing Russia as a rival in Syria, Turkey finally perceived Russia as a partner in seeking the conflict resolution. On the other hand, Russia had a historical perception of Turkey as one of the most essential countries in the region and the area gatekeeper (Eran, 2005). Besides, Turkey saw a shift in Russian foreign policy from direct intervention to a mediator even though the country was still interested in maintaining the existing Syrian regime. Russia was willing to negotiate to end the conflict even with the Syrian opposition groups (Business Insider, 2016). For Turkey, Russia had more concern about Syrian conflict than other actors like the US and the EU.

International reactions to the Turkish government's measure to maintain domestic stability post-2016 coup also mattered. Turkey received a series of criticisms from foreign countries since the government conducted harsh actions towards many people suspected to be engaged in the coup and the PKK organization. Meanwhile, Turkey received a supportive stand from Russia which recognized

its democratically elected leader and condemned the unlawful coup. It was unconditional political support from Russia to Turkish government compared to its western allies.

Turkey found its moment to change its foreign policy strategy in Syria. Russia's support to its domestic political matter was able to accumulate the need of current policy's new strategy in Syria besides the more increasing Russia's roles. Russia could be a possible ally for Turkey to create stability in Syria after a several-month disharmony.

The United States and the European Union's Differing Orientations in Syrian Crisis and Their Stands on Turkey's Domestic Politics

The US and the EU used to be Turkey's allies in Syrian crisis before Turkey reconsidered its foreign policy. Those countries condemned the Syrian regime as the regime that was not willing to give up the power and did not have any plan to create a transitional government to stop the violence against its people nor allowed democratization in Syria.

The two actors had worked together with Turkey in gaining international support to press the Syrian regime. Turkey expected those actors would be sufficient to end the regime through their roles in the United Nations and NATO as well as maximizing its role in international fora. The US and the EU had backed some conflict resolutions deliberated in the United Nations' Security Council to resolve the crisis and investigate the Syrian regime and possibly bring the regime to International Criminal Court. However, the efforts were always vetoed by Syria's allies, mainly Russia.

Meanwhile, Turkey expected the immediate measure to topple the Syrian regime as the longer the regime stayed, the more threats it faced. As a member of NATO, Turkey had also preferred the security organization to take a similar action like what it did in Libya to remove the regime. Erdogan (2014) stated that Turkey would provide its military base provided that the military actions were conducted with an international mandate as well as participating in the mission. Realizing Russia's position in the Syrian crisis, a member of permanent five, the sanction and pressure to the Syrian regime through the United Nations were barely effective.

Even though the US, the EU, and Turkey together supported the Syrian opposition groups, the latter had more commitment to their struggle against the Syrian regime. Not only did Turkey facilitate the inception of SNC-FSA, but it was also hosting them on its ground, training the fighters and opening its border to ease their movements. In the international level, Turkey invited many countries to support the opposition body as the legitimate representative of Syrian people against dictatorship through Friends of Syria (Luerdi, 2015). Meanwhile, the SNC's member, Mubarak (2014), stated that the western countries did not keep their promise to the opposition groups since they were reluctant to help the opposition forces fully and instead, they left the groups in internal conflict.

Turkey realized that both the US and the EU had shifted their policy in Syria. They were no longer interested in removing the Syrian regime and supporting the opposition groups. Instead, the US preferred to direct its foreign policy to counter the ISIS within Syria by supporting the Syrian Kurds, and among whom the PYD (YPG) were the most reliable ally. The US contributed to consolidate the military forces in northern Syria to face the ISIS' fighters and take over the areas from its conquest by forming the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) in 2015 (Almasri, 2017).

For Turkey, the US' move was against its security interest. The PYD was the PKK's sister organization which was still labeled a terrorist group by the Turkish government. The PYD had shown its opposition to Turkey's policy in Syria, supporting the Syrian opposition groups to conquer the areas, especially in northern Syria. The US ignored Turkey's rejection of the PYD-USA engagement since the group was the most powerful and effective body to counter the ISIS in Syria.

The EU, on the other hand, preferred to give more attention to the refugee problem resulted by the crisis rather than the regime problem and Syrian opposition groups. UNICEF (2016) recorded more than 1.2 million refugees migrating into Europe since 2015, including from Syria mainly through southeastern Europe. The EU was facing the security threats with the existence of the refugees on their land. Furthermore, rejections were coming from the member countries and their nationals for its policy to host

refugees fleeing from conflict countries. Though the EU and Turkey had talked over sharing the refugee problem through some negotiations and in return, Turkey demanded more roles from the EU in Syria, the institution did not show more willingness to intervene to remove the Syrian regime.

The US and the EU stands after the failed coup in Turkey were taken into account. The US and the EU criticized the Turkish government's measure to return the stability in the country which they considered contrary to Turkish democracy and accused it of being an authoritarian regime. For Turkey, such reaction was not a friendly policy as allies should show, otherwise typical western double standard. Turkey already risked its negotiation with the EU regarding the visa-free policy and endangered its EU membership chance since its domestic stability was the most important.

Realizing its differing allies' stands on the Syrian crisis and domestic politics encouraged Turkey to reconsider its foreign policy in Syria. What was expected from the US and the EU; Turkey could not achieve their consistency of policies and their regard over its home stability need. Meanwhile, Turkey saw Russia could cooperate to return stability within Syria without losing its need for domestic stability. The US and the EU were no longer reliable allies since they chased their interests by risking Turkey's interest.

Turkey's Foreign Policy Strategy Change

The considerations of domestic and external factors encouraged Turkey to change its foreign policy strategy in Syria. Inasmuch as Turkey still maintained its vital interest in security and stability, the country still directed its foreign policy in Syria. Turkey would not keep a distance to its neighboring conflict as its foreign policy was always formulated with reference of historical trends and a sense of active agency as well as a geographical positioning (Davutođlu, 2012). However, Turkey's foreign policy shifted to more mediation role. Turkey considered Russia as a reliable partner in seeking the resolution for the durable Syrian conflict; as a result, it reduced its rhetoric against the Syrian regime. Instead, Turkey and Russia promoted the dialogues between the regime and the opposition groups. Such Turkey's foreign policy strategy change could

be indicated by the two countries' rapprochement, Moscow Declaration, and Astana Peace Talks.

Turkey-Russia Rapprochement

Turkey had severed its diplomatic relation with Russia by shooting down the Russian warplane in November 2015 which it claimed that the jet entered the Turkish territory. Meanwhile, Russia blamed Turkey for the accident since the jet was still in Syrian territory. Russia's military presence in Syria was at the Syrian regime's request to attack the radical groups. However, Turkey criticized the Russian military moves because they targeted not only the ISIS fighters but also the Syrian opposition groups.

Russia had taken some policies to respond Turkey's action such as mainly economic sanctions. Russia suspended its trade and tourism with Turkey and imposed restrictions on Turkish companies and nationals in Russia as well as suspending the visa-free arrangement with Turkey. The other disadvantageous policy that Turkey suffered as a growing industrialist country was Russia's decision to reduce its gas flowing to the country and the suspended work on a Black Sea pipeline that should allow more gas flows to Turkish industry (DW, 2015).

After months of deteriorated diplomatic relation with Russia amid the enduring Syrian conflict, Turkey decided to officially settle its tie after sending an official letter to the Government of Russia. Turkey officially extended its apology to Russian people and expressed its condolence to the Russian pilot who was the victim of Turkish military shot in the Syria-Turkey border. In return, Russia lifted its economic sanctions over Turkey, and the two countries could continue the trade and other kinds of cooperation as they used to have. The most important part of the two countries' rapprochement was the declaration of commitment against terrorism in Syria and readiness to work together to seek a solution for the Syrian conflict.

For Turkey, the diplomatic rapprochement with Russia was an important policy for its intervention continuity from which it would be able to pursue its domestic security and stability interest regarding the conflict in Syria. Such policy was an initial move of its new foreign policy strategy. Russia could not be separated from the conflict resolution seeking as it had invested interest in the region

as well. Engaging with Russia was the most rational choice for Turkish government instead of relying on its western allies. Only by the rapprochement could Turkey cooperate with Russia in facilitating and mediating the warring parties in Syria.

Moscow Declaration

The Western actors mainly the US along with the United Nations had worked to make progress for the Syrian conflict de-escalation, but they did not make significant gains for a better situation. Otherwise, the conflict continued causing more victims and maintained a sharp difference between the Syrian regime and opposition groups. Several efforts initiated by the United Nations to mediate the crisis failed, and the US calls for the regime change did not work either. The latter preferred to risk more costs on the ISIS within Syria.

Moscow Declaration was initiated by Turkey and Russia, by involving Iran as another important actor in the crisis, as a reaction to the US' failure attempts to make significant gains in Syria. The declaration was a calling for an expanded cease-fire in which Turkey and Russia would be the guarantors (Eren, 2017). The two countries had a capability of taking such a move since they had links directly to the conflicting parties. Turkey had a connection to oppositions groups; on the other hand, Russia was the Syrian regime backer. The two countries became the mediators and facilitators that could bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table with their supervision.

Moscow Declaration was conducted without the involvement of the US and the United Nations since Turkey and Russia would like to have more roles in the crisis. Furthermore, as the Turkish foreign minister stated the declaration was not only for the Syrian regime and opposition groups but also for other connected groups supporting either of them (New York Times, 2016). The declaration was followed by the cease-fire and the evacuation of the opposition fighters.

Moscow Declaration was an event showing Turkey-Russia cooperation in the Syrian crisis to provide stability in the country. Turkey which was backing the Syrian opposition groups was willing to bring them into negotiation forum with the Syrian regime only after the cease-

fire. Russia which already cost a lot for the Syrian regime, agreed to do the same thing, bringing the regime to negotiation forum with the opposition groups. Such joint declaration strengthened Turkey's foreign policy strategy change in Syrian crisis by which Turkey was able to further steps to engage with Russia in creating stability in Syria which was considered an important contribution to its domestic security and stability as well.

Astana Peace Talk Rounds

Turkey-Russia declaration included plans to have a series of peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, where the representatives of both Syrian regime and opposition groups could meet directly in the peace process. Although the United Nations was not the initiator of the peace talk rounds, the institution supported the Turkey and Russia's attempt. The United Nations, the US, and other countries could participate only as observers, while Turkey, Russia and Iran were the actors guaranteeing the process and the results of the negotiations.

By the end of 2017, Turkey and Russia-Iran had conducted eight peace talks with a variety of issues negotiated such as a cease-fire, de-escalation zones, refugees and the humanitarian issues covering the issues of exchange detainees, prisoners of war and missing people (Astana Times, 2017). The peace talks not only discussed over the new issues concerned by the two conflicting parties but also proceeded those in previously stagnant Geneva conferences which were once conducted by the United Nations.

Despite some insignificant results of the Astana Peace Talks, Turkey seemed to be committed to the peace process rounds and collaboration with Russia which is considered more effective and promising rather than the western allies. Turkey perceived Russia's commitment as a guarantor in Syria during the peace talks, and it was strengthened by Russia's policy to withdraw its military presence in Syria. Besides, the two countries were willing to bring other actors who were related to either the Syrian regime or opposition groups.

Turkey's attempt to conduct and guarantee the Astana Peace Talks with Russia was an action that indicated its foreign policy strategy change in Syria. Turkey perceived that the United Nations' efforts and western countries'

commitment did not work to achieve a better situation in Syria; otherwise the situation in the country caused more instability and uncertainty which also harmed its domestic security and stability. Instead, Turkey collaborated with Russia to take over the western countries role in seeking conflict resolution.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, it could be concluded that internal and external environment followed by the decision-making process in Turkey, encouraged the country to change its foreign policy strategy in the Syrian crisis. Since its early intervention in 2011, Turkey had been embracing its domestic security and stability as vital national interest so that it would like to take any necessary action or policy to pursue such interests. Turkey's intervention in this stage had been directed to purposively topple the Syrian regime and replace it with the Syrian opposition groups by building an alliance with the western actors and by which, the new regime in Syria would be able to create stability and resist the PKK-PYD influence in Syria.

However, in 2016, Turkey reconsidered its internal and external environment amid the stalemated war in Syria and evaluating its foreign policy which had not yet yielded the outcome as expected by its decision makers. The growing PKK-PYD and ISIS' threats and the coup event which then emphasized the importance of home security and stability were internal factors Turkey concerned; meanwhile extra-regional actors' behaviors like Russia, the US, and the EU as external factors strengthened its domestic situation. As the information assessment, Turkey perceived Russia's foreign policy shift from a direct intervention role supporting the Syrian regime to a mediator role besides its unconditional support after the coup. Meanwhile, the US and the EU took a different direction.

Turkey changed its foreign policy strategy. It was then engaging Russia as a reliable partner to create stability and end the conflict within Syria. However, the purpose of its foreign policy was still alike; the pursuit of domestic security and stability. Turkey's foreign policy strategy change began with the two countries' diplomatic rapprochement from which they could continue to other attempts such as the Moscow Declaration and the Astana Peace Talks in

which they acted as the guarantors.

Turkey is one of the world emerging forces whose foreign policy is increasingly active especially in the region where it lies. In the case of Syrian conflict, Turkey is an important actor which great power should consider regarding their interests, and it could be either a rival or a friend. Next, to the finding above, this article revealed that Syria was highly dynamic as it was a meeting point of interests of numerous actors. Regional and extra regional actors would consider the changing situation surrounding it, including Turkey.

The topic in this paper might be interesting as well if other researchers would analyze it from different perspectives, especially whether Turkey's realignment with Russia has worked better to bring the conflict resolution in Syria and security in Turkey and the region of the Middle East. Even though the findings can be different, they will develop more understanding of Turkey's foreign policy and will benefit those who are studying and lecturing the issues of Turkey's foreign policy.

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