CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Within the spheres of International Relations (IR), issues between two countries or more, conflicting interests between each other’s goals, conflicting power race, creating a strong foreign policy strategy in order to gain a greater benefit for each other are very common affairs in the International World. Power, in particular, has always become a very critical element to be concerned about in the International World. Power is always a very interesting concept to be talked about in International Relations. The study of International Relations inescapably involves the study about power relations among major states. Despite each state’s condition and position in the international world today, the world will always need a hierarchy, and this is hard to establish in an anarchical world. Although there will be no guarantee that even with a hierarchy of power, states in the world will all stop pursuing their national interests and gaining more power that will seems to ménage other countries.

Ever since the Ancient Greek entered the era of civilization, there had been conflicts of interest in the struggle to gain power. International relations and politics are two concepts that are intermingled together and cannot be separated. Politics is often seen as the arena of competitive interests, but it is undeniable that politics is also an arena for nations to cooperate together in achieving mutual interests. Talking about power, eventually it will end up in issue concerning
weaponry. One of the most important issues of struggle for power that has required high attention in the international world is the issue of nuclear power. Nuclear power is a very sensitive issue for international security. In today’s era, the competition of nations to be stronger than each other has been evolved into owning nuclear power. It is undeniable that nuclear power is useful, but it is also undeniable that nuclear power creates instability and threads to weaker countries in the world. If nuclear power is not utilized well, and used for the right reasons, it can be the beginning of a global catastrophe, for power domination between states in the world. Many countries are in the interest of developing nuclear power, such as Iran. Iran is developing nuclear power as an energy alternative to take a part in helping the energy crisis. Apparently some oppositions doubt that Iran is really developing nuclear as an energy source, or on the other hand they could develop nuclear as weapon of mass destruction. But nor does Russia. This paper will deliver an explanation on Russia’s foreign policy strategies addressed to the Middle East region in particular is Iran, why Russia has been pursuing its relation in that region, what makes that region so important, what is Russia’s position toward the Iranian nuclear development, and what consequences does Russia face to pursuing relations in that region in order to maintain its power status in the international system.

Under Vladimir Putin leadership, Russia experienced major reforms in many ways that shaped the new Russia.¹ All of these reforms mostly happened in

the beginning of 2000, when Putin first stepped in as the president of Russia replacing Boris Yeltsin that strided down surprisingly. History shown that Russia has been through many tribulations from the events of World War I and II, the Cold War, and of course, the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia ceded its land and gained new territories, made political concessions and achieved impressive victories in the global political arena, fought financial and economic crises and went through periods of unbelievable economic upturns. The first president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin used to be an excellent president of Russia, but after a series of economic and political crises in Russia in the 1990s, The Yeltsin era was marked by widespread corruption, economic collapse, and enormous political and social problems. Until Boris Yeltsin stepped down in the end of 1999, Russia’s overall condition as a country that was still poorly developed. In the year of 1999, Russia’s GDP was only 195.907 billions. Then Putin stepped up as Russia’s second president in the end of the 1999, early 2000. Ever since Putin has been in charge of Russia, the GDP of Russia increased all years of his presidency. While in 1999 the GDP of Russia is only 195.907 billions, in the year of 2007, GDP of Russia increased momentously into 1,289.582 billions, which is almost 10 times more than the

---

GDP of Russia in Yeltsin’s era.\(^5\) With the momentously increase of GDP in Russia’s economy; poverty in Russia was also decreasing. Russia also managed to pay its foreign debt and had their own reserves for military upgrade. Russia also minimized the existence of oligarchs in their economy that was inherited from Yeltsin’s era. Therefore, seeing Russia’s major establishment restoration made the world wondered on how Russia with such capability and potentials will continue to grow and may possibly become one of the world’s major powers. Russia is indeed making the rest of the world to reassesses and encourages not to underestimates its capabilities.

Such exceptional progress that Russia has done to its own development and domestic concerns at some point will intersect with the need of every country in the world to interact with other countries and pay attention to global concerns because of a simple fact that all countries are located in the universal world. So immediately after Russia had recuperated from any domestic crisis that it had been through, Russia started to put more attention on its listed global interests. Moscow’s principal interests still laid mostly in the West (that is, Europe, including western members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and North America), but the relative importance of Asia (China, India, Japan, Korea) is clearly on the rise. The Middle East, which lies geographically between those

key areas, is back on Moscow’s radar screen.\textsuperscript{6} Clearly the Middle East region has always been a concern for Russia’s foreign policy, even since the era of Yeltsin’s supremacy and later on it was being inherited to the Putin’s era and now, under Mevdvedev’s era.

The foreseeable issue is not merely that Russia is assisting the nuclear program of Iran. Russia’s foreign policy is said to be not really in favor of supporting the Arabs, but neither does in favor to Israel. It is aimed at securing Russian national interests. Maintaining close and friendly ties with Arab states and Israel is among them.\textsuperscript{7} Russia is once again seen as a country that owns a very huge ambitions in fulfilling its national interests, Russia might be facing a turbulently foreign policy decision that might be seen as controversial but own a hidden agenda inside, that only Russia itself knows it. In this changing international system where more and more countries are growing rapidly and gaining more power and influence in the international world such as China and India, Russia will need to escalate its game plan.

It is beyond doubt that the U.S. sees the Middle East region as one region that is so troubled. In recent years, issues concerning military, wars, nuclear, territories are the most sensitive issues about the Middle East that were brought into attention by so many countries in the international system. On the other hand, Russia had shown some patterns of alliancing countries in the Middle East region, especially Iran. It is not only Iran that has been supported by Russia, but from all


\textsuperscript{7}“Russia and Israel to join forces in anti-terrorist cooperation.” (available at http://english.pravda.ru/world/asia/07-09-2004/6866-israel-0/). Accessed on 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 2012.
of other Middle Eastern countries, Iran is the one that has always been allies with Russia even since the Soviet times. Russia was Iran’s primary supplier of weaponry, including supersonic jets, tanks, and submarines, and Moscow was also building a nuclear reactor complex for Iran at Bushehr.8

Recent news on Russia-Iran relations is that most of the time they are both pursuing the same goals. Iran considered Israel to be its political arch-foe.9 While Israel was strongly tied with the United States, by the fact that Iran is in the page to view Israel as their political arch-foe, made the United States viewed Iran as an affliction preventing their objectives. In addition, Russia believes Iran is in its national interests and is apparently ready to use military force to defend them.10 While Israel and United States have repeatedly asked Russia to scrap a contract to sell Iran the truck-mounted S-300 which can shoot down hostile missiles or aircraft up to 150 km away. The possible sale of the S-3-00S, which could protect Iran’s nuclear facilities against air strikes, was an extremely sensitive issue in Russia’s relation with Israel.11 An agreement was signed saying that Russia is constructing a light-water nuclear reactor power station at Bushehr, which was located in southwestern Iran, along the Persian Gulf.12 Seeing this position, Russia

was seriously backing up Iran while on the other hand United States was also seriously backing Israel.

In light of these conditions, Russia may be said to be in a controversial position. Domestically, Russia is already able to achieve greatly of its domestic concerns and move on to their next global interests. By achieving its global interests, sometimes during the process occurs some overlapping between another country’s interests in this case is hardly the United States.

Based on the brief explanation above, this research is titled “Russia’s Foreign Policy toward Iran’s Nuclear Development in order to sustain its Power Status”.

1.2. Research Question

The issue of the impact of Russo-Middle Eastern relations on Russia’s efforts in restoring its power and influence in the region and also the world is very interesting to be talked about, especially when Russia’s ambitions has always been very clear, to be acknowledged as a major power in this world. In recent times, with the deteriorating performance of the United States of America within the international system, which started to happened in the year of 2008 when the United States was experiencing some financial crisis and also facing many conflicting issues such as ambush to Iraq and war in Afghanistan. Russia as a country with a very strong determination of its goals has a very strong willpower to keep delving and finding the perfect chance and timing to possibly be the next superpower. There are some preconditions that need to be fulfilled in order of
becoming a world’s prominent major power, but of course the stability of the
country itself is one of them. Beyond doubt, Russia is performing greatly in
industrial and service sector to their GDP, also the economy is very well
strengthened by oil and gas resources. The problem now for Russia is to question
whether they can maintain power and influence to a certain region to help
pursuing their goals as a great power.

Middle East region, especially Iran, hence plays a very important role
exactly for Russia. Foreign policy directed from each of every country in this role
often portrayed as an important role in determining a state’s success in achieving
its goals. In this content, foreign policies from Russia directed to Iran were very
important tools in achieving Russia’s grand goals. Not only does Russia seem to
be very cooperative to Iran, but also selective in their gains and losses in every
action that they took in Iran.

Nuclear power is indeed very crucial issue in the international world. With
the invention of nuclear power, it is very true that energy security issue can be
solved but it is hard to prove one country that owns nuclear whether it is really
producing nuclear for the sake of energy security or for the sake of weapon of
mass destruction. This is the controversy that Iran is facing with Russia by its
side. Having such controversial utility, the issue of nuclear power has its own
significance. Hence, questions that appear in this research are:

1. How power status becomes very significant to Russia’s foreign policy in
today’s international world?
2. What are Russia’s interests in Iran’s Nuclear Development?

3. How Russia exercises its foreign policy through Iran and its nuclear development to maintain its power status?

1.3. Goals and Significance

1.3.1. Goals

There are three goals of this research paper. First of all is to explain the significance of maintaining Russia’s power status in today’s international system where many countries are developing so rapidly and chasing for more influence and power in the international world. In order for Russia to secure its national interests, Russia will need to be stronger and stronger. Second is to provide a description of Russia’s interests toward Iran’s Nuclear Development. Third is to provide a description of Russia’s foreign policy towards Iran and its nuclear development to achieve its interests.

1.3.2. Significance

This research paper aims to provide a better understanding on Russia’s foreign policy and how it includes Iran as a part of the Middle East region, and how Iran can be significant enough for Russia as a tool to fulfill its global interests which is to be a major power in the world. In this particular case, the discussion on the importance of a strong foreign policy decision strategy towards a country’s powerful performance, as the precondition of being a powerful state,
becomes the focal point. It is of great importance to highlight the balance of power as crucial factor in the international system. In a complex and intertwined world, balance of power is seen as a way for one country to secure its position in this world, so that they will not feel threatened by the greatness of another country.

1.4. Thesis Organization

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Every chapter in this thesis is intertwined and complementing to one another. Chapter one is a brief section which provides background information regarding the topic. The background is general introduction to what the thesis is all about. Next, the research questions provide the main questions of this thesis. The questions briefly summarize as well as giving an overview of the main result of this thesis. This chapter also provides the goals and significance along with the thesis organization.

Chapter two discusses various concepts and theories that are relevant towards this particular study. Such concepts like balance of power, international cooperation, foreign policy, traditional security, arms race, and nuclear power will be included in the chapter II of the thesis. Several literature studies will also be added in this chapter.

Chapter three provides a description on the research techniques that are going to be used, the scope of the research, research type methods, and what kind of data and materials will be used in making this thesis.
Chapter four provides the analysis of the topic in this thesis; the foreign policy of Russia towards the Iranian Nuclear Development. Data analysis will be done and organized based on thematic issues. Moreover, the analysis will be conducted on several related data such as journals, articles, news, statistics, written policy documents, or statements regarding Russia’s foreign policy and also regarding to Iran and its nuclear development. Such data are analyzed with the purpose to answer the research questions as previously written above.

Chapter five will be filled with comprehensive conclusion taken from the thesis that has been done and also some recommendations from the writer regarding the issue in the thesis.