

Analysis of Russian Policy on China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) through National Identity

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Abstract: China's new policy the One Belt One Road (OBOR) which is a new policy to improve connectivity and integration among countries in the world. The policy is reaping responses from various countries, one of them is Russia. Russia gave a very positive response to being a member of OBOR. Russia seeks to give its best role and effort to realize China's policy. Russia's policy to follow OBOR can be analyzed through national identity which is one tool to see why Russia is excited to follow it. In this paper, the authors argue that national identity is indeed one of the factors influencing the policy. Response given Russia closely related to the position of Russia who want to become a pivot in Asia. However, the national identity is not the tool that's enough to analyze Russian policy as a whole because of the weaknesses and limitations that exist when doing the analysis.

1 INTRODUCTION

The One Belt One Road (OBOR) policy is a new breakthrough organized by China. President Xi Jinping announced at the end of 2013 that China would build a Silk and Maritime Line that boosts the economy between countries. It can be said that this OBOR initiative is one of the greatest initiatives or plans in today's modern era. This path will pass through other strategic, big, and developing countries. At the beginning President Xi Jinping wanted to form the Silk Road through China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Moscow, Poland, Germany, and France. Later, China will also build a Maritime Line that passes through several Chinese cities such as Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Guangzhou, Belhai, and Haikou. In addition, maritime routes will also pass through Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Italy (Cai, 2017).

China basically wants to establish better relations with neighboring countries. This is related to one of the main objectives of China to increase connections between hinterland countries to Europe and through several countries in Asia. China sees that these countries actually have significant strategic value so China have a strong to will establish deeper cooperation within the scope of economy and security through OBOR. Previously, China also wanted to increase its peripheral diplomacy aimed at

maintaining the stability of China and its neighbors. Therefore, China will continue to work to encourage these countries to participate in the process of regional economic integration and accelerate the process of infrastructure development and connectivity which will lead to the emergence of a new regional economic order (Cai, 2017).

Through these policies, China has embraced thirty state leaders to join and actively participate in the realization of this policy. OBOR is President Xi Jinping's ambition in the economic field. According to Golley and Song (2011), China has had a positive impact on the growth of the world economy with efforts to enhance integration with other countries in the world trade system. China's ongoing new breakthrough will transform the political economy relations globally. Therefore, not all countries provide a positive response to the policy. The interesting part is that China seems not too difficult to embrace Russia in its policy, instead Russia is responding not only positive related to China's OBOR but also active to follow this policy.

2 RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ON OBOR

The relationship between Russia and China can be considered as a good relationship. Especially in 2014,

Russia and China have a closer relationship. This is not apart from the sanctions received by Russia since 2014. Moscow which is the center of economic, financial, military, and energy export activities is one of the sanctions' target. These sanctions were granted from Western European countries against Russia. This condition eventually forced Russia to join the cooperation and establish good relations with countries in Asia and especially China. In fact, Russia has been trying to establish relations with Asian countries since 1992. But the Russian opportunity to cooperate increase during the reign of President Xi Jinping around 2013 and has 12 times meeting and signing several deals for better relations (Upadhyay, 2016).

China has focused its policy on regional security issues and increased connectivity that can be achieved through OBOR. In this regard, Russia responds to the policies positively. This positive response can be seen through Russian approval to join 29 other country leaders to join this policy. Not only that, Russia has also signed an agreement to improve the economy and weapons with China (Upadhyay, 2016). In addition, the positive response provided also linked with the Russian pivot's goal to Asia. It can't be denied that the alienation of Russia by the West because of the Crimean case changed the orientation of Russia to lean to the East. This goal is further emphasized by Putin in 2011 (Dave, 2016).

Russia chose to get closer to China and join the OBOR policy because China is the most active actor in the region. Of course, in the process of approaching to the East, Russia is also slowly cooperating with ASEAN. However, OBOR became one of Russia's special concerns to achieve the main goal of pivot to Asia (Dave, 2016). In this paper, the author will analyze why Russia is very enthusiastic to join China's OBOR. The author will analyze the policy with national identity level of analysis although this tool does not fully answer the reason behind Russia's acceptance and enthusiasm for the policy.

3 NATIONAL IDENTITY AS TOOL OF ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ON OBOR

National identity is a tool in level of analysis that close to constructivist views and sometimes also close to a rationalist framework. However, the national identity itself still has to face some criticism. Criticism is certainly related to the lack of national identity as a

tool of analysis, among which is fundamentally one-sided and there is a gap between material and ideational. Moreover, the national identity itself if only depends on constructivist then it can't explain how the state interpreted the existing structure in the international world and how the state uses the structure in interacting with others. This is what the post-structuralist (Waeber, 2002) trying to answer.

Post-structuralist emphasis on the concept of self-other relations. Not only that, according to the post-structuralist, language is also an important thing because through the language can be seen how a country represents the reality that exists. In post-structuralists, national identity is not a tool that can see a great framework for looking at all state policies. However, national identity can be used to look at small constellations within a country. Identity is a rational concept that results from the relationship between self and others who have influence historically. National identity is not a tool that seeks the motive behind a policy but rather takes on other small hidden factors that may affect the policy (Waeber, 2002).

There are three levels or layers in the national identity that can be used to analyze Russian policy towards OBOR. First is the first level or first layer which analyzes how the state understands itself. This level consists of how the ideas related to the concept of the nation state. The thing to do is to see in advance how the process of forming the nation state. Then, look at how and why the construction of identity in a country. The analysis of the construction is seen internally close to the welfare state and externally related how the projection of a country from self to another country. In addition, it is also seen whether there may be attachments which is emotional and cultural root that affects the formation of a nation state (Waeber, 2002).

4 RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS RESULTS ON OBOR TROUGH NATIONAL IDENTITY

4.1 First Layer: Value, Ideology, and Russia's Perspective

First of all, the author analyze through the first level that will see how Russia is positioning or viewing its own country. First, related in the formation of nation state. Russia is a country with a long history of statehood. Communist ideology is an ideology that has

remained firmly held by Russia even since before the time of the Russian empire has considered itself as a great power state. However, in the process of its formation, Russia also had time to feel the revolution because of the imperial government that seemed to oppress the society like a slave. Then, there was a Bolshevik revolution that ultimately contributed to the formation of Russia as a state. The formation of the nation state of Russia is also inseparable from the collapse of the Soviet Union after the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviets could be a turning point from Russia's efforts to change the imperial heritage or unilateral power transformed into a federal state (Hahn, 2002).

Russia's foreign policy also not far from the value or assumption that Russia is a great power state. This is because the elites in Russia itself. The elites in Russia has a significant role and leave the idea that Russia is a great power even after the Cold War ends. This can be seen firstly through foreign policy issued by Russia in 1991. The important point of the policy is the Russia's aim to achieve unity between Russia and the world's countries because Russia is a great power state since centuries ago, unique in geopolitics and has military power that should be considered (FPC, 1993). However, in practice Russia isn't wanting to change the identity or value that has been ingrained so far, but Russia is now more pragmatic. This can be seen from Putin's policy that showing the reflection and rooted in the consensus of the Russian elite that identifying Russia as a global great power. The power of the state is the basic method of achieving national interests (Clunan, 2009). Therefore, it can be seen how ultimately identity as great power has been constructed since before the formation of the inherited Russia to this day. That is also led to the expansion of Russia and the existence of annexation efforts in the Crimea.

Then, there are other values that Russia holds as their identity. The history of the formation of the Russian state is also inseparable from past attempts to protect the region from invasion. Therefore, Russia is a country with a community of courage and has a very strong will-power. In addition, Russian society also assumes that he is the winner (Likhacheva and Makarov, 2014). On the other hand Russia is also a country that can be said not close to Western countries especially Western Europe. It can be said so because Russian society itself considers that Russia is a unique country and different from other countries. If viewed through historical facts, there is not a spreading of belief that Russia is a marginalized state among other European countries. This is evidenced by the existence of three princesses from Russia who

became queens in Norway, Denmark, Hungary, and France. Currently, Russia considers itself has a high cultural and spiritual level that may be even higher than Europe. Therefore, in fact the Russian society has a different culture and spirituality that will never merge with the West (Lavrov, 2016).

Russia that not merged with Western countries including Western Europe became one of the important factors why Russia finally got closer to the East. Russia feels that its original culture is closer to Eastern Europe or the Eastern world. This can be seen from the similarities of language and art relating to Antiquity and Byzantine times (Likhacheva and Makarov, 2014). Moreover, after the Crimean case caused Russia to get sanction. In fact, prior to the Crimean case, Russia also felt threatened by the presence of the NATO alliance (Zevelev, 2016). The Russian approach to the country in the East can also be seen from its policy in 1993. Russian policy since 1993 has stated that indeed Russia will focus on the country in Asia especially China, Middle East countries, and ASEAN as Russia considers that these countries are emerging state (FPC, 2013).

Then, in the final stage of the first level is related whether there are attachments that are closely related to the nation state. Of course in the Russian state there is also a spirit of nationalism associated with the formation of a nation state. It has been mentioned that indeed from ancient times Russian society has been constructed into a brave society by having to fight the invasions (Likhacheva and Makarov, 2014). In addition, the attachment that is closely tied to the present day is Russia which considers itself as a global great power. Although there is little change in foreign policy that currently leads to pragmatism, that value is still firmly held by Russia.

4.2 Second Layer: Russia's Position vis-à-vis China

Then, after discussing the values and ideology that underlie his own view, the author will discuss how Russia sees China. It is clearly seen that Russia views China as one of the partners or friends they can work with since the Soviet collapse. Although, at the time of the leadership of Mao Zedong and Nikita Khrushchev, Chinese relations were not good with Russia because of ideological problems, alliance relations continued after the fall of the Soviet Union. This is due to the decline experienced by the Soviets at that time that requires the relations normalization with China (Lukin, 2016). After that, in 2016 to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Russia's relationship with China, the two countries signed the

Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation (Upadhyay, 2016).

In addition, Russia also considers that 2/3 of its territory is located in Asia. Russia sees that the Asian region, including China, is a thriving region and focuses on economic and political interests which is also Russian interest. Therefore, Russia has established a cooperative relationship with China since 2010. This is because by establishing economic cooperation relations with China, Russia sees an opportunity and challenge to return active in the international world. Chinese and Russian cooperation can also be seen from the emergence of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and RIC (Russia, India and China) (Lukin, 2016).

Seeing China and the Asian region promising the development for Russia, Russia ultimately wants to be an Asian axis or often called Pivot to Asia. Asia is regarded as one of the important keys to the source of energy and military security for Russia. Therefore, China's cooperation with Russia continues until the issuance of China's OBOR policy, regarding China's ambition to expand the production market to the European market. Of course this is very interesting for Russia to join with China. According to Fattibene (2015), there are three main reasons why Russia is finally keen to join OBOR's policy. First, Russia sees that to fulfilled their ambition in Eurasia by recognizing China as emerging power. Secondly, Moscow has arranged and convinced Beijing to recognize the EEU as one means for joint discussion. Third, the \$ 40 billion funding for the Silk Road will be a crucial resource for Moscow to improve its infrastructure. Therefore, OBOR is seen as one of the maneuver that can be used to fulfil Russia's ambition.

4.3 Third Layer: Russia's Positive Response on China's OBOR

In the early formation of Russia, a decision or a policy is indeed regulated by the political elite in Russia. To see the actors who play an important role in Russia's policy towards OBOR is none other than Putin and other political elites. Putin and other Russian elites justify that Russia is strongly responding positively to the One Belt One Road policy launched by China. The justification is supported by a statement from Alexander Gabuev who is one of the key people in the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy in Russia. Gabuev (in Shtraks, 2016) states that indeed Russia and China are in a cooperative relationship in the field of investment projects, especially logistics goods and infrastructure projects that will enhance relations

between the two countries. Then, Russia will also seek to implement the three pillars of OBOR that is to increase trade or bring up a free trade zone, economic partnership, and facilitate trade.

Putin as one of the actors who is equally important in making positive policy towards OBOR also do some things that support the Russian response. Putin often met President Xi Jinping to sign several agreements including an agreement to engage actively in OBOR. The meetings of President Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin are not only related to the OBOR issue but the 2017 meeting in Xiamen is to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017). Several agreements are held to support Russia's position on China's OBOR policy. Russia continues to strive for how Russia can be actively involved in the policies issued by China.

5 THE ANALYSIS RESULTS THROUGH TREE LAYERS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY ANALYSIS

After going through three levels of analysis in national identity it can be argued that the national identity owned by Russia has little effect on Russia's policy on China's OBOR policy. It can be said so because the greatest influence given by the Russian national identity is the value that it possesses as a great power state and the proximity of relations with the eastern states. If seen through the value of great power it can be seen clearly that Russia will give a very positive response to OBOR. To increase its power, Russia can't develop by itself. Russia needs China's help to remain as a great power state and achieve its goal of becoming an Asian axis or pivot to Asia. The Russian policy is also supported by the political elite and every Russian policyholder. Then Russia will surely be more inclined to China than the Western countries because apart from two-thirds of the Russia's region located in mainland Asia, Russia considers that its culture and spirituality is very different from Western values so that Russia can't merge with the Western countries. Therefore, Russia finally decided to get closer to Asia and approved One Belt One Road to increase connectivity with other countries with China. In addition, this positive response is also supported by how Russia defines the Chinese state. China is considered as one of the partners that made Russia gives a positive response to the policy of OBOR.

However, the weakness of the national identity level of analysis is Russia's condition that more pragmatic towards their foreign policy changes nowadays. The pragmatic nature is finally unable to explain Russian behavior and foreign policy as a whole through national identity. This is because of the pragmatic nature have no fixed pattern in every policy issued by Russia. Then, values such as courage and strong will-power impressed not very influential because of the presence of the pragmatic side of Russia. Therefore, the author considers that Russian policy towards OBOR can be explained through national identity but not strong enough because it does not see the overall factor why Russia responds positively to OBOR.

6 CONCLUSION

From the above explanation, the author conclude that the real national identity is not a sufficient tool for explaining Russia's positive foreign policy towards OBOR. This is because the limitation of the national identity as the level of analysis. If you look at the value of Russian heritage as a great power and see Russia's good relations with China after the Soviet Union then it is an additional factor of why Russia took the policy. Regardless of its weakness, at least through the national identity it can be seen that the value that Russia still holds firmly is how Russia views itself as a great power state and a winning country. That is what has become one of the factors why Russia finally approved the OBOR.

In addition, Russia is also not a country that integrates with Western countries including Western Europe. That is one of the important factors why Russia is finally getting closer to the East. Russia feels that its original culture is closer to Eastern Europe or the Eastern world. This can be seen from the similarities of language and art relating to Antiquity and Byzantine times. Moreover, after the Crimean case which caused Russia finally got sanction. In fact, before the Crimean case, Russia also felt threatened by the presence of NATO alliance. These factors lead to why Russia is ultimately closer to Asia than any other country in the West. As it turns out, small factors such as national identity can also have little effect on Russian policy-making.

Russia considers that OBOR's policy can be used as a maneuver to improve its economy and military. Moreover, Russia can increase its great power with China and become one of Asia's axis countries. The limitations of the national identity tool as the level of analysis can be seen on how pragmatic the Russian

nature in taking its policy especially after the fall of the Soviets. It is something that can't be answered by the national identity level of analysis because in the pragmatic nature there is no definite pattern in the interaction between Russia with China and other countries.

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