



Legal Study of Iran's Perspective on One Belt One Road Initiative as a China Economic Expansion Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The unique thing that happened was that China became a party that could cooperate with countries in the Middle East even though these countries were at war with each other. China became a great support for Iran when the United States decided to launch an embargo on Iran, but China in fact has a strong cooperative relationship with Saudi Arabia which is a rival to Iran. In terms of the feud between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, China was able to become a mediator by using the CASCf forum in Beijing. When Saudi Arabia launched an economic embargo on Qatar, the steps taken by China were to increase exports and imports so that it could replace the United States, which had previously been a source of Qatar's imports. China is able to negotiate with countries in the region by offering the establishment of a more effective cooperative relationship, which is valid for a long period of time in the diplomatic, security, and economic areas. China's economic expansion has been achieved by establishing good bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, although there are big differences in the geopolitical interests of each country. The purpose of this study is to examine China's Strategy; Economic Expansion in the Middle East Region, and Iran's Perspective on the One Belt On Road Initiative, with legal analysis methods and descriptive analysis related to the themes in this paper. China's economic expansion has been achieved by establishing good bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, although there are big differences in the geopolitical interests of each country. The purpose of this study is to examine China's Strategy; Economic Expansion in the Middle East Region, and Iran's Perspective on the One Belt On Road Initiative, with legal analysis methods and descriptive analysis related to the themes in this paper. China's economic expansion has been successfully achieved by establishing good bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, even though there are big differences in the geopolitical interests of each country. The purpose of this study is to examine China's Strategy; Economic Expansion in the Middle East Region, and Iran's Perspective on the One Belt On Road Initiative, with legal analysis methods and descriptive analysis related to the themes in this paper.

ABSTRAK

Hal unik yang terjadi adalah bahwa China menjadi pihak yang dapat melakukan kerjasama dengan negara-negara kawasan Timur Tengah walaupun negara-negara tersebut saling berseteru. China menjadi dukungan yang besar bagi Iran ketika Amerika Serikat memutuskan untuk melancarkan embargo terhadap Iran, namun China pada nyatanya memiliki relasi kerjasama yang kuat dengan Arab Saudi yang merupakan rival bagi Iran. Dalam hal perseteruan Qatar dan Arab Saudi, China mampu menjadi mediator dengan menggunakan forum CASCf di Beijing. Ketika Arab Saudi melancarkan embargo ekonomi terhadap Qatar, langkah yang diambil China adalah meningkatkan ekspor dan impor sehingga dapat menggantikan Amerika Serikat yang sebelumnya menjadi sumber impor Qatar. China mampu bernegosiasi

dengan negara-negara di kawasan tersebut dengan menawarkan pembentukan hubungan kerjasama yang lebih efektif, yang berlaku untuk jangka waktu yang lama dalam area diplomatik, security, serta ekonomi. Ekspansi ekonomi yang dilakukan China berhasil dicapai dengan cara menjalin hubungan bilateral baik dengan negara-negara Timur Tengah meskipun terdapat perbedaan besar dalam hal kepentingan geopolitik masing-masing negara. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji China's Strategy; Ekspansi Ekonomi di Kawasan Timur Tengah, serta Perspektif Iran Terhadap One Belt On Road Initiative, dengan metode analisis hukum dan analisis deskriptif yang berkaitan dengan tema dalam tulisan ini.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historical perspective shows that after imperial China gave up its maritime presence and Silk Road trade declined, China did not re-emerge as a powerful actor in the Middle East until after the Communist victory in the Chinese Revolution. At first, China's lack of success in its economic strategy hindered the progress of China's relationship-building in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Iran and China have established diplomatic relations since 1971. Previously, there was a decline, namely during the Cold War era, which debated about the communist ideology adopted by China. However, when the UN seat was occupied by China by replacing Taiwan, China's cooperation with Arab countries made positive progress (Yulianti and Affandi 2018). Initial interactions that took place at the time were very simple, China did not have the financial means or diplomatic or political power to promote and protect its interests in the region. 1979 was a major turning point in China-Iran relations. The Western arms embargoes against Iran in 1979 and 1980 following the return of Ayatollah Khomeini and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran proved very effective.

During the 1980s, China supplied weapons to Iran and Iraq. At that time Saudi Arabia also for the first time attracted serious attention to the United States' concern about China's role in the Middle East, after China demonstrated its strength in helping Saudi Arabia (Mackenzie and Misc 2010). In the following years, China became one of the countries that actively formed economic cooperation with Middle Eastern countries. For example, in the One Belt One Road policy, the vision brought is a harmonious bilateral relationship, so that it can support improvements in agriculture, foreign investment, industry, as well as increasing China's productivity (Syafriani and Kusuma 2019). One Belt One Road itself as a strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 has been seen as a revival of land trade routes projects that can embrace countries that can be more active and exposed to strategic trade routes. This is related to the theory of recognition in the study of international law that can establish international relations, one of which is because of recognition.

This recognition theory states that a country is recognized because there is recognition from another country, meaning that if there is recognition from another country, then that country has established international relations, including Iran. This is related to the theory of recognition in the study of international law that can establish international relations, one of which is because of recognition.

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II. METHOD

This research was conducted by focusing on examining the application of positive legal rules or norms related to legal regulations (Laws) and the second method was through the Juridical Empirical method, with the nature of the research being descriptive analytical, in this case the author seeks to systematically examine and describe positive law. These two approaches will be combined together, resulting in more accurate legal materials.

The documents/legal materials used to analyze legal issues in this research problem are primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. (Peter Mahmud Marzuki: 2007) Where these three legal materials are the main data or referred to as secondary data, which includes, primary legal material, where the regulations or statutory provisions as written law. Furthermore, secondary legal materials are materials that provide an explanation of primary law such as textbooks, research reports, scientific journals, magazines, newspapers, internet sites, and documents. Then tertiary legal materials, namely supporting legal materials such as general dictionaries, legal dictionaries, language dictionaries Indonesian, economic dictionary and also bibliography

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

China's Strategy; Economic Expansion in the Middle East Region

After the embargo on Iran by the United States which was marked by the country's exit from the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), Iran suffered losses due to the threat of US sanctions, including India and South Korea. On the other hand, China continues to cooperate with Iran. Chinese companies have become parties to fill the void that is the impact of this embargo, so that it becomes the largest cooperative relationship that Iran has, especially with the existence of One Belt One Road which further increases the effectiveness of China and Iran trade.

The unique thing that happened was that China became a party that could cooperate with countries in the Middle East even though these countries were at war with each other. China became a great support for Iran when the United States decided to launch an embargo on Iran, but China in fact has strong cooperative relations and foreign agreements (Salim HS; 2008) with Saudi Arabia, which is a rival to Iran. In terms of the feud between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, China was able to become a mediator by using the CASCF forum in Beijing. When Saudi Arabia launched an economic embargo on Qatar, the steps taken by China were to increase exports and imports so that it could replace the United States, which had previously been a source of Qatar's imports.

China is able to negotiate with countries in the region by offering the establishment of a more effective cooperative relationship, which is valid for a long period of time in the diplomatic, security, and economic areas. China's economic expansion has been successfully achieved by establishing good bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, even though there are big differences in the geopolitical interests of each country.

China's involvement in conflicts among Middle Eastern countries is broadly a form of economic and trade cooperation. Like when the conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia occurred, China provided economic assistance so that it could overcome problems such as the food crisis, depletion of foreign

exchange reserves, and other problems. China often forms an effective and strategic cooperative relationship strategy so that it is profitable for Arab countries. Therefore, Arab countries feel benefited and accept China as an economic cooperation partner who does not show interest in meddling in dealing with problems faced by Arab countries, with their economic impact, (Astari Marisa: 2020), especially regarding the reform process. . This attitude is highly appreciated by countries in the region, not like the United States which is considered Arab countries are carrying out their imperial ambitions. The perception of China and Iran is the same in this regard, namely they want to fight the domination of the United States, so that they can then promote a multipolar economy and international system (Yulianti and Affandi 2018).

Iran maintains good bilateral relations (Angga Nurdin Rahmat: 2017) with the help of international institutions. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and AIIB are examples of the development of the formed economic alliance. According to the similar perspectives of the two countries, the orientation of the cooperation between Iran and China is trying to fight the domination of the BRICS countries. A declaration that discussed criticism of the unilateralist economy was agreed at the BRICS Summit in July 2018 by discussing the importance of an open economy (Yulianti and Affandi 2018).

One Belt One Road Initiative As China's Exalted Strategy

One Belt One Road Initiative involving about 65 countries and 900 projects with an investment volume of 850 billion dollars (Chua 2017). The Asian Infrastructure Investment (AIIB) launched an initial capital of 100 billion dollars for the One Belt One Road project. The name the One Belt comes from the “Silk Road Economic Belt”, a revival of the old land-based Road that connected China with Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe. So it is also called the Modern Silk Road. Meanwhile, the One Road refers to the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” whose strategy is to connect Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

Although some researchers think that the One Belt One Road Initiative is an initiative that promotes China's economic collapse by creating a seamless global market (Sheu and Kundu 2018), the One Belt One Road Initiative is seen as being able to rebuild Asian economic and political relations through the development of cooperative relations in the field of trade, politics and culture. There is debate emanating from policy makers and scholars from the United States, Japan, and India who state their security threat in the One Belt One Road region because of the growing influence of the One Belt One Road initiative coming from China. But China only considers the criticism as propaganda against the peaceful journey of the One Belt One Road Initiative,

For Iran itself, for the first time in the last 500 years, China as an Eastern power has been able to replace Europe in the economic field, thus becoming a very important trading partner of Iran. Since the Chinese authorities introduced the One Belt One Road Initiative, discussions on this matter among politicians of the two countries, as well as the media, have always contained references to the history of Iran-China interaction through the ancient Silk Road and the belief that the One Belt One Road Initiative can revive old ties. the. In an article published in Iran Daily ahead of his 2016 visit to Iran, Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized the key role of historical relations between the two countries, referring to the role of the Silk Road in facilitating bilateral interactions (Shariatnia and Azizi 2019).

China's Interesting Factors in Iran

Iran has an important position in the One Belt One Road policy, because it has a favorable geostrategic position, with its wealth of oil and gas resources. Iran has become an important economic partner for China, for international transmission (M. Rosyid; 2017) and this can be seen from Iran's large imports of Chinese oil and gas. Is a country that relies on Iran as the largest oil importer.

One Belt One Road Initiative covers parts of the world with less stable economies, while continuing to cooperate with embargoed Iran, problems often arise between Iran and Chinese state-owned

institutions with large amounts of USD 25 billion (CNOOC, CNPC, and Sinohydro). There are also troubled \$12 billion rail construction and real estate projects in Libya, \$4.6 billion energy projects in Pakistan and \$3.8 billion oil projects in Syria. The next most problematic areas for Chinese SOEs are North America and Australia. Where the main sectors of these troubled assets are found in energy, metals, transportation, finance, and technology assets. China can solve this problem through its risk management plan. In March 2015, China issued an action plan that describes the main objective of the BRI which is to “enhance regional cooperation through effective and strategic connectivity between countries located on the ancient Silk Road and beyond”.¹¹ The economies participating in the BRI represent more than a third of global GDP, and more than half of the world's population., and as stated by China, the focus on connectivity within the BRI is on facilitating trade and investment, and thereby developing neighboring countries, as well as strategically underpinning energy, resource and food security by taking on a regional leadership role with its neighbors including Iran being of the utmost importance (OECD 2018).

Iran's Perspective on the One Belt On Road Initiative

Iran's Economic Advantages and Geostrategic Position

In February 2021, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif praised the close cooperation between Tehran and Beijing as a mutually beneficial interaction, considering such strategic relations to remain unaffected by developments, as well as the intensity of international trust, (Nahdia Rachmayanti; 2013) in Iran believes that the meaning of cooperation is something that will not be affected by conflicts that occur, especially in the Middle East. Zarif expressed hope that Iran will play a bigger role in this One Belt One Road Initiative, as a strategy for establishing economic cooperative relations with Asian, European and surrounding countries (Mehdi 2021).

The Iranian government considers the signed cooperation agreement to have a comprehensive roadmap, with an economic dimension that serves as the main axis of the document, with emphasis on ethical principles, (Gunawan Widjaya: 2006). This includes cooperation in various fields, as well as Iran's involvement in the One Belt One Road initiative with a particular focus on the private sector in both countries. With its massive oil and gas resources, Iran is in an excellent geographical location to take advantage of the benefits of China's Silk Road Project. Iran's geostrategic position, which lies on the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf border, is important to China, which is part of why it encourages Iran's serious involvement in this project.

If the investment conditions and the presence of foreign companies to complete Iran's industrial, oil, gas and energy projects are not provided, Iran will miss an important opportunity, and Iran's rivals and neighbors will be able to take advantage of it to increase political influence in the region, and gain benefits. substantial economy. Meanwhile, the best route to reach markets in Central Asia and the Caucasus is through Iran and its transport infrastructure, which provides them with all the necessary conditions to take advantage of the policy.

Since 2016, the authorities in Iran have expressed a willingness to embrace China's One Belt and One Road project. Referring to Iran's capabilities, the two sides signed a document on Iran's participation in this project, and the two countries set out steps to cooperate in various fields, such as railways, ports, energy, industry and services.

The first train to take the long route from China to Iran departed from Yiwu City in China's Zhejiang province on January 31, 2016. It covered 10,399 km, passed through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and reached the Injeborun border station after 14 days. The opening of this railway is an important step in the One Belt One Road project. The opening of this railway line greatly increased the volume of trade between the two countries. Strengthening Iran's position in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank could also be effective in helping Iran implement other projects and help accumulate financial resources to build infrastructure.

Factors of Loyalty of China to Iran

Among the factors driving Iran's involvement in the One Belt One Road Initiative is China's loyalty during the US embargo on Iran. Due to US sanctions and with the withdrawal of European companies from some Iranian rail projects, the projects were halved, and Chinese companies and Chinese financial institutions took part in participating. If Iran fails to provide the necessary capital and technology to complete such a project, it is unlikely that the Chinese Silk Road will benefit and facilities in the short to medium term. Delays in infrastructure completion could have a negative impact on Iran's position in regional development and projects. For this reason, the One Belt One Road Initiative has the potential to improve security in the region (Kalehsar: 2019).

It can be seen that Iran's cooperation in various fields is strengthened by China because Iran's value is an important factor in China's efforts to balance the strength of the United States in the Middle East. This relationship has proven to lead to a soft attitude from the United States towards China after the Iran embargo. From Iran's point of view, China's consistently facing threats from the United States is seen as a form of loyalty.

IV. CONCLUSION

The importance of the One Belt One Road initiative cannot be overlooked because of its active role in mutual peace as well as economic development. This initiative connects Asian countries such as Brunei, Bangladesh, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Maldives, Sudan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan through sea ports, oil and gas routes, and economic corridors. The initiative also finances free trade economic zones and energy development projects in its member countries. Some analysts even refer to Iran as the new Silk Road Energy Center. From this point of view, Iran can play an important role in the economic development of the region, the world and the improvement of relations between countries.

With its massive oil and gas resources, Iran is in an excellent geographical location to take advantage of China's Silk Road Project. Iran's geostrategic position, which lies on the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf border, is important to China, which is part of why it encourages Iran's serious involvement in this project. Iran's economic and geostrategic advantages are the driving factors for Iran's involvement

In addition, among the factors driving Iran's involvement in the One Belt One Road Initiative is China's loyalty as long as Iran is embargoed by the United States. China is a party that can cooperate with countries in the Middle East even though these countries are at war with each other. China became a big support for Iran when the United States decided to launch an embargo on Iran. China's economic expansion has been achieved by establishing good bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, although there are big differences in the geopolitical interests of each country. In addition, the perception of China and Iran is the same in terms of the United States, namely wanting to fight the domination of the United States and promote a multipolar international system.

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