



Research Paper

Analysis of the War in Syria and the Involvement of UN in the Conflict

Dr. Dimple Chaudhary

(Visiting Faculty)

Department Of Defence & Strategic Studies ,
Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune (Maharashtra)

ABSTRACT

After more than six years, the Syrian conflict has seemingly gone down a rabbit hole. Foreign and regional powers from everywhere have intervened, further complicating the conflict. However, many people are interested in the way that foreign nations are attempting to fight each other on foreign soil. Humanitarian intervention was called for, but the United Nations and other international bodies haven't been able to make much of an impact on the conflict. As a result, most experts now agree that peace in Syria won't be restored until the U.N. takes a firm stance. This article tries to provide light on the reasons the United Nations has not emerged as a leading contender in the Syrian conflict.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the conflict began in 2011, many Syrians have fled the country in search of safety, while others who stayed behind face daily struggles for survival. One of the worst humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century, the 'Syrian War' has affected over 12 million people's lives, leaving hundreds of thousands living below the poverty line and clinging to survival by a thread. According to UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, "Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time, a continuing cause of suffering for millions which should be garnering a groundswell of support around the world." According to the UN (2016). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports, "More than 920,000 people had been newly displaced within Syria as of April 2018," citing data from the United Nations. Even though there was a real possibility of bloodshed, neighbouring nations like Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon kept turning away Syrians at their borders. 5.6 million Syrians had fled the nation by September 2018, with most going to neighbouring countries. (2018), Human Rights Watch. In March 2011, nonviolent antigovernment protesters in the city of Daraa were arrested, sparking mass protests to overthrow the government of Bashar Al-Assad. Syrians started leaving their homes as protests grew more violent. Since March 2013, millions of refugees have fled to Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey. In 2018, it was claimed that more than 3.6 million refugees were living in a camp established in Turkey. An estimated 139,000 Syrians have been residing in the Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps, where they have been making do with almost little since they fled to Jordan. While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working hard to aid more than 126,000 Syrian refugees in Egypt as of 2018, Iraq has been receiving a growing number of new arrivals and is presently sheltering over 246,000 individuals. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) conducted a Humanitarian Crisis Analysis in 2019, which summarises the rising numbers of refugees as follows: "The conflict in Syria, now in its ninth year, is one of the largest displacement crises in history where around half of the population has been displaced, either internally (6.2 million) or as refugees to, mainly, neighbouring countries and, to a lesser extent, other countries (5.6 million registered refug. The majority of refugees left their home countries between 2011 and 2015, right before many of those nations began restricting entry. "Turkey hosts the greatest refugee population, at 3.6 million, followed by Lebanon at 1 million and Jordan at 700,000 and 1.3 million, respectively. Syrians began making their way to Europe as a result of the influx of refugees from the Middle East. In 2019, the European Union (EU) is said to have accepted more than 96,000 Syrians, many of whom were given "protected status" by Germany. More over 584 thousand Syrians are currently residing in Germany, as reported by the UNHCR. Although the numbers of Syrian refugees in Greece, Sweden, and Austria increased in 2016, they decreased in 2017 due to the rapid rise of anti-immigration groups like the Generation Identity Movement. It is anticipated that Canada has welcomed 68,000 refugees since 2015 (Todd, 2019), whereas the United States has welcomed 85,000. A generation is at stake against unprecedented challenges, including surviving not only the horrors of

war but also poverty, hunger, and illness; while the fighting in Syria may be ending soon, for Syrians displaced in the country and those residing across the world, it seems far from the finish. Viewing the Syrian conflict with a Realist worldview sheds light on the origins of the conflict and the goals of various countries' interventions. However, the relevance of non-state groups like Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Hezbollah is not taken into account by realists. As the war progressed, their contributions helped both sides achieve victory. For instance, ISIS was able to take strategic Syrian cities and proclaim Raqqa as the capital of Syria. In addition to hurting the position and harming the credibility of Syrian opposition organisations, the extremist groups have been blamed for radicalising thousands of Syrians. The U.S. and other western countries recognised the threat posed by the spread of extremist groups and were ultimately compelled to intervene militarily in the Syrian civil war. Non-state entities are not a serious danger to global powers, which is one of the problems with the realism paradigm. The international efforts to end the violence in Syria, including peace negotiations and ceasefires, cannot be explained by realism either.

SYRIAN WAR — BACK TO STARTING LINE

Multiple international actors, rival parties within Syria, and horrific occurrences have all contributed to the 'complex web' that is the Syrian War, which has turned Syria into a place of fear, turmoil, and lost hope. During the Arab Spring in March of 2011, which laid the groundwork for the pro-democracy uprising in Syria and was characterised by University College London researcher Tim Williams as "A Loss of Faith." There could be a number of causes for the escalation of violence. President Bashar Al-Assad's instructions to strike peaceful protestors in Daraa are linked to a major incident that also resulted in the mass detention, torture, and murder of innocent citizens, particularly young adults and teenagers. Protesters and President Bashar's supporters went to war after the arrests set off a chain reaction of anger among the populace and fueled demands for Bashar's resignation. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was established in July 2011 as the first rebel organisation fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The crisis has been exacerbated by the involvement of several international parties. The ongoing conflict is between two religious factions, the Shia and the Sunnis, but their followers see it as a struggle for religious freedom and economic justice. They used to coexist peacefully and tolerate one another's theological differences, but now they're at the centre of numerous protracted wars across Syria and the Middle East. Supporters of Shia and Sunni entered the Syrian conflict in the form of countries and other organisations that backed the battle by contributing weapons, troops, and funds, greatly increasing the complexity of the conflict. While the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and Europe support the rebel groups, Iran, Russia, and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah back President Bashar and his allies. Other religious groups, like as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have been reported to be involved in the conflict as well. In an article for *The Conversation*, Julie M. Norman, a research fellow at Queen's University Belfast in the fields of crisis Transformation and Social Justice, says, "The Syrian conflict has been described as a civil war, a proxy war, and a sectarian war." The Syrian government, supported by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah, faces up against the "moderate" rebels, supported by the US-led coalition, Turkey, and the Gulf States, all while attempting to control Islamic State. Kurds fighting ISIS and the Assad administration have the support of the West, but they are also being bombarded by Turkey, which is trying to quell a Kurdish revolt on its own territory. The recent crimes and increased French involvement could make an already difficult situation even more so (Ketchell, 2015). The genuine agenda of 'giving Syrians the right to freedom' has faded away with so many 'actors' waging the conflict in Syria; instead, the increasing numbers of Syrian refugees are proof that the 'end to the war' is far from the finish line. The conflict has cost the lives of over a million Syrians and injured half a million, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). "At least 560,000 have been killed, but only 367,965 deaths have been fully documented," it says. It was reported that 20,819 children and 13,084 women make up the 111,330 civilians out of a total population of 560,000. A total of 65,048 Syrian military and 50,296 members of militias supporting them have been killed. A total of 108 radicals, including individuals with ties to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), have also been eliminated. There have been 63,561 deaths among opposition forces, including those fighting under the banner of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The Shia organisation Hezbollah in Lebanon, which is aligned with Damascus and Iran, has lost at least 1,675 militants in the conflict. Over half a million people have died, 104,000 of them as a result of torture in Syrian government prisons. (SOHR 2018). Another 11.7 million Syrians who have fled their homes in 2019 are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, according to a recent assessment by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The 'Syrian War' has had a catastrophic effect on refugees and migrants still living in the nation, who have no idea when they will be able to return to their own homes.

BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT

Those who support Syria's long-standing government and those who want to overthrow it are on opposite sides of the country's ongoing civil war. Since 1971 (Sharwood, 2016), members of the Assad family have ruled Syria. After his father Hafz al-Assad passed away in the middle of the year 2000, Bashar al-Assad was picked by the authoritarian regime to lead Syria in an absolute form. Bashar al-Assad was a trained ophthalmologist at Western Eye Hospital in London, England at the time. Unlike many other regional ruling families, the Assads do not adhere to religious fundamentalism. Syria's internal ethnic tensions have exacerbated the situation. The Alawite sect is a minority in the predominantly Sunni country, although its members are prominent in government and the military. However, the insurgents should not be underestimated, despite the Assad government's superiority in devastating firepower and battalions of loyal, elite forces. They are extremely driven, and demographics should eventually favour them. Twelve percent of Syria's 23 million people are Alawites. About 75% of the people (I am Syria) are Sunni Muslims, who form the backbone of the resistance. In 2000, Assad took over as president after his father's death, and he was widely hailed as a modernizer and reformer. Unfortunately, few of the high expectations set under Assad's leadership were realised (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). The Syrian people have thrown behind their old beliefs because the Baathist ideology, Arab Socialism, has been discredited since the year 2000 due to the country's failed wars with Israel and its wrecked economy. Nonetheless, Assad made some attempts to update the regime, but time was running out. Private investment was attracted by the socialist remnants' attempts at reform, setting off a boom in urban middle-class consumerism. As Primoz Manfreda (2017) points out, the wrath of the Syrian people was stoked by the fact that privatisation of the economy benefited primarily the wealthy, privileged families with ties to the regime. As a result, many individuals lost their jobs and the cost of basic necessities rose.

The widespread perception of corruption is another factor contributing to the unrest. Well-managed payments can also do wonders in Syria, and a licence was not required to operate any kind of business. Those without resources and connections instigated widespread unrest in the nation's capital. Black markets and smuggling grew commonplace as corruption in the system persisted. The Syrian rebellion was fueled in part because the middle class was starved (Primoz Manfreda, 2017). International groups have been extremely critical of the human rights situation in Syria. Many fundamental liberties, including those to freely express oneself, associate with others, and assemble in a public space, had already been severely restricted prior to the revolt.

From 1963 to 2011, the country was under emergency rule, and it was illegal for more than five persons to congregate in public. The security personnel might detain and arrest anyone at any time. Human rights activists and other government critics have been subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention, and torture at the hands of the authorities. In the public sector, women and minorities experienced bias. In 1962, thousands of Syrian Kurds were refused citizenship and their descendants have been classified as "foreigners" ever since. Tensions in Syrian Kurdistan have been rising since a series of riots broke out in 2004. Since then, there have been intermittent skirmishes between Kurdish protestors and security forces. Bashar al-Assad was largely seen as having failed to implement any improvements after the Damascus spring of 2000, when democratic change was hoped for. Before the 2011 uprising, Human Right Watch released a study saying he hadn't done anything to enhance human rights since becoming president (Contributors, Syrian Civil War). A contributing factor to the revolt in Syria was the country's environmental problems. The drought that hit Syria between 2006 and 2010 was the worst in the country's modern history. Due to the economic downturn, hundreds of thousands of farm households were forced to relocate to urban slums (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2017). The United Nations estimates that between 2006 and 2011, 75 percent of Syrian farms failed and 86 percent of animals died. There was a severe lack of both water and food (Primoz Manfreda, 2017).

There are several external causes underlying the current crisis in Syria, in addition to many internal causes. Syria has consistently taken a pro-Palestinian stance on Israel at the international level. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most pressing issue in the region of West Asia right now. Other contributing causes are its proximity to Russia and Iran, its socialist ideology, and its backing for Hezbollah in Lebanon. On the other hand, due to their proximity to the United States, Syria's relations with Saudi Arabia and the other GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries are not positive (Haran, 2016).

INVOLVEMENT OF UN IN THE CONFLICT

In March 2011, demonstrators in Syria first took to the streets to voice their opposition to Bashar al-Assad's regime. There has been no letup in the bloodshed in the country after more than six years. The battle in Syria has resulted in 470,000 deaths, millions of injuries, and millions of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries, as was mentioned before in this paper. According to Chapter I, Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, the organization's primary goal is "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace," as well as "to bring about by peaceful means, and in

conformity with the principle of justice and international law, adjust between States whatever differences may arise between them concerning any matter relating to international peace and security." As cited in (Steiner, 2016). Over the course of the past year, multiple U.N. entities have responded to the growing crisis in Syria (Barrow). This includes the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, and the Security Council. As the international guardian of the new world order, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is expected to swiftly act with the support of its ten nonpermanent member states to resolve international crises when and where they arrive, before they turn bloody. The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are participating in the war in various ways. In reaction to protests and the increasingly brutal response by the government, the United States began pressing for the Assad administration to step up as early as 2011. As a staunch defender of Bashar al-Assad's family's dictatorship dating back to Hafez's time in power, Russia used its veto power at the United Nations to block any requests for sanctions. The Russian operation in Syria that began in the autumn of 2015 had a significant impact on the war and the diplomacy aimed at ending it, according to The Annual Review of World Affairs (2016). Although the United States and its Gulf allies had supported and trained "moderate" rebels, these groups had been outmatched by jihadist rebels like Jabhat al-Nusra, the local branch of al-Qaeda and the free Syrian army (Spencer, 2015). The United States regularly conducts airstrikes against the Syrian army in support of rebel movements. China's diplomatic efforts in the Syrian war have aided Russian countermeasures against U.S. and European Union plans since those countries did not receive China's veto support. Russia's indirect backing of China in the Security Council helps to undermine U.S. efforts. The United States is leading an international coalition in conducting airstrikes in Syria against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). At least 1256 civilians were killed by these attacks between September 2014 and April 2017, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR). On the other hand, Russia started bombing Syria in September 2015 with the intention of helping to defeat ISIL. Most airstrikes, however, have hit residential neighbourhoods and other resistance elements beyond of government authority. As of 30 March 2017, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) stated that Russian airstrikes have killed 3315 ISIL fighters and 5013 civilians, including 1201 children. The three Western nations on the UN Security Council are quite upset with each other for their actions with regards to Syria. When President Obama was finally convinced to threaten air strikes in 2013 over the regime's use of chemical weapons, it was largely due to French pressure. After Mr. Cameron failed to win a vote in the House of Commons, he felt severely undermined by Britain's refusal to join in (Spencer, 2015). Some armed opposition groups receive weapons from Saudi Arabia and Qatar. While this is going on, Iran and Hezbollah are providing the Syrian regime with vital economic and military backing (Syria, 2017). Time and again, the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect, who report to the Secretary-General, have spoken out against the widespread violations of human rights committed against the Syrian people by the Syrian government and other non-state actors. They were extremely critical of the uptick in government airstrikes over Syria, as well as the use of barrel bombs and other forms of collateral damage in civilian areas. Religious and ethnic minorities who are seen as supporting the government have been cautioned that such attacks could trigger reprisal action by non-state armed organisations.

The United Nations Security Council produced a resolution in 2011 that strongly criticised the Syrian government for its human rights abuses. Russia and China used their veto power to kill the resolution on October 4, 2011. The United Nations' failure to protect human rights in Syria was highlighted by this resolution.

A Western-Arab resolution was addressed in the Security Council on January 31, 2012, demanding an immediate ceasefire and supporting the latest Arab League Peace Plan from December 2011. It also called for Assad to step down from office. This resolution was vetoed by Russia and China on February 4th. The United Nations General Assembly considered and approved a nonbinding resolution on the same topic on February 16, 2012. International Reactions to the Syrian Civil War (2017) notes that Russia, China, and ten other countries voted to reject the resolution. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2043 of 2012 established the United Nations Supervision organisation in Syria (UNSMIS), a U.N. peacekeeping organisation, to help bring an end to the conflict. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been given the role of special envoy. Despite having 278 military observers, 81 international civilian employees, and 40 local civilian staff as of 30 June 2012, UNSMIS was officially shut down on 16 August 2012 (O., 2012).

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2118 was passed on September 27, 2013, and it formalised Syria's willingness to hand over its chemical weapons stockpile (Contributors, International Reactions to the Syrian Civil War, 2017).

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2139, passed on 22 February 2014, authorised the delivery of humanitarian supplies in Syria. The United Nations Security Council reauthorized humanitarian aid deliveries to rebel-held areas in Syria through four border crossings not under government control on 14 July 2014 (Contributors, Humanitarian aid during the Syrian Civil War, 2017). The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2254 on December 18, 2015, endorsing a peace plan for Syria and outlining a schedule for negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition parties (UNSC, 2015). U.N. Security Council

Resolution 2328, passed on December 19, 2016, called for unimpeded, prompt access to observe the evacuation of civilians from Aleppo, Syria. Resolution 2332 (Contributors, List of United Nations Resolutions Concerning Syria, 2017) renewed the authority for cross-border humanitarian delivery in Syria until 10 January 2018.

Several resolutions were passed by the UN General Assembly urging all parties to work towards a peaceful resolution to the issue. By requesting a briefing from U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the Security Council in January 2013, the General Assembly hoped to put pressure on the Council to take action. The Secretary-General has now said, "We must do everything we can to reach Syrians in need. Diplomatic efforts must be ramped up to end the violence in Syria and the region, and inside the United Nations Security Council. The General Assembly passed a resolution on 15 May 2013 condemning the escalation of the conflict, violations of humanitarian law, and violence, and calling on the government to protect its people, act in accordance with international law, and assist the commission of inquiry investigating allegations of chemical weapons use. International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect). The resolution further requested that the Secretary-General report back to the General Assembly within 30 days on the resolution's implementation.

II. CONCLUSION

Before the civil war broke out, Syria was a peaceful, secular, and economically stable country. Now, it is being destroyed. Over half of Syrians need urgent humanitarian aid, and many more have been displaced or are living as refugees elsewhere. An estimated one in four Syrians has lost their life. Whatever the cause or context of the crisis, and whoever may be accountable for it, finding a means to end the violence is an urgent priority. Given that there are groups being funded from overseas that are considered extraterritorial by international law, this will be an extremely difficult undertaking.

We might characterise the current situation in Syria as a failure of the international community and the United Nations in particular. All members of the UN Security Council are implicated in some way or another in Syria, making the United Nations completely powerless to do anything about it. Russia has used its Veto Power more than eight times in support of the Syrian regime, thus the United Nations must adopt steps that can neutralise the Veto Power used by the permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. The Syrian civil war has escalated into the worst conflict of this century, and there appears to be no end in sight. The Syrian conflict is now a question of the prestige of both superpowers after the intervention of Russia and the United States. In the pretext of fighting terrorism, the United States and Russia have been bombing civilian facilities including hospitals and schools. The Syrian administration believes that both the government and the rebel factions should do everything possible to put into practise the United Nations Security Council resolution from December 2015 aimed at decreasing the level of bloodshed.

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