COUNTRY DYNAMICS ON THE APPLICATION OF RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (R2P): A CASE OF SYRIA BETWEEN 2011 AND 2019

BY

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DECLARATIONS

I, FIRTHOZA ALI AHMED, hereby declare that this Research Project is my original work and has not been presented for any other academic award at the University of Nairobi or any other institution.

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This project has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, for their love and endless support through this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in the backdrop of contending political discourses on the application of the principle of the responsibility to protect. This was particularly in the international prevention and reaction to violations of human rights and the global apathy towards efforts to stop atrocities and violation of human rights across the world. From the aforementioned, the study sought to examine the country specific dynamics that influence the applicability of the principle of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and its efficacy in humanitarian issues ensuing from an armed conflict. This study had three objectives; first, to examine how the doctrine of R2P has been used in risk management in Syria; secondly, to find out how natural resources influence the application of R2P in Syria; thirdly, to examine the effects of ethno-religious factors and hegemonic power politics on the observation of R2P in Syria. The study was theoretically guided by structural realism and man-milieu hypothesis. Methodologically, the study was a case study based on secondary data which was analysed thematically. The study found out that the failure of the doctrine of R2P to stop conflicts, atrocities and to protect civilian population in Syria was not a failure of the doctrines per se but that of the imperfect actors and institutions responsible with its implementation and apathy ensuing from the partisan usage of R2P to advance selfish interests. Further, the application of this doctrine has been complicated by the country-specific dynamics. The study also found out that Syria's natural resource configuration complicate humanitarian interventions with competing geopolitical interests among the intervening global and regional powers. Finally, the study found that Syria's conflict has exploited the ethno-religious fissures in the country further fermenting conflict and complicating humanitarian efforts. The study recommends cooperation to thwart humanitarian apathy and address the issue of how to effectively protect civilians at risk. In addition, there is a need to harness the potential of international and regional institutions in order to challenge the notion that sovereignty is a potential hindrance to the application of the principle of the responsibility to protect.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECR2P	European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Area
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
WW II	World War II

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

International intervention in the international system is an old phenomenon but recent prominence of this concept can be traced back to the period after the cold war. It is however, critical to note that the intensity and purpose of international interventions has evolved over time. States such as Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq have experienced interventions in the years after the cold war. It is in the history of these interventions that the Right to Protect (R2P) emerged within the interventions (Brock, 2011).

The concept was first coined in a 2001 report titled *The Responsibility to Protect* authored by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). This Commission was responding to the United Nations concern on when the international community ought to intervene for humanitarian reasons. This concern was informed by a 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo where it was noted the intervention caused more harm than good. These controversies were also present in Somalia and Bosnia (Atilgan, 2014).

The basic principles of R2P are founded on the idea that state sovereignty comes with responsibility and a state has primary responsibility for its citizens. However, the inability and or failure of a state to protect its civilians from grave harm caused by internal strife, war and repression calls for a disregard of the doctrine of nonintervention leading to the international right to protect. R2P is characterized by three stages of responsibility that include the responsibility to protect, responsibility to react, and responsibility to rebuild. Responsibility to react is the obligation to take action with sanctions, prosecution, and military intervention while responsibility to rebuild involves reconstruction and recovery after the intervention. Prevention is the main aspect of R2P and this option should be exhausted before any intervention. Military interventions for humanitarian purposes can only be authorized by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and in order to allow for an effective and well-coordinated approach, the permanent members have to come to an agreement on the application of veto powers as long as their national interests are not infringed on. This will avert the possibility of negative consequences in the humanitarian intervention (ICISS, 2001).

The ratification of R2P at the 2005 UN World Summit marks a critical juncture as it gained impetus as it was an outcome of the Summit where governments agreed there is a collective responsibility to protect humanity. Further, the UN Secretary General in 2009 established the R2P and advocated for its implementation in a peaceful way except when it is necessary to reinforce through military force. R2P has three pillars underpinning its foundation. One, that a state has responsibility to safeguard its own population from atrocities; two, that international community has a role of encouraging and helping states to offer protection; and that the international community has a responsibility to collectively take action in order to prevent and stop crimes in case a state fails (UN, 2009).

The R2P has been applied in Libya where the UNSC passed Resolution 1973 calling for a no fly zone and application of all necessary measures to protect the civilian population in the country. Further, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1970 condemning use of lethal force on protesters and also imposed a range of sanctions on the government. The case in Libya marked the first time the UNSC allowed use of military force in the responsibility to protect in order to stop and prevent atrocities against a population. However, the successful application of R2P by the UNSC in Libya was not replicated in the case of Yemen which the human rights situation was equally grave. The failure to achieve any success in Yemen is also replicated in the Syrian case where conflicts have protracted for years. Here, the application of R2P has failed to deliver its principal prescriptions as populations continue to be misplaced and killed in the war (Kahama, 2015). Notable in the Syrian case however, is the geopolitics surrounding the intervention. Syria had strong allies (Russia and China) who were against intervention through vetoes at the UNSC. These countries were cautious not to replicate the Western military invasions of Libya in Syria (Kuwali, 2012). In lieu of the aforementioned, this study examines the application of the doctrine of R2P. the choice of the Syrian case is informed by the dynamics of great power politics, the conflict mutation in time and space and currency of the conflict and the humanitarian efforts.

1.2 Problem Statement

Touted as the prevention oriented conflict management approach to tackle existential threats to humanity including crimes against humanity, genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes and the doctrine R2P was adopted by the UN at the 2005 World Summit as a global political commitment to address conflict and its repercussions on civilian non-combatants.

While the principle of R2P has undoubtedly garnered widespread global support with success stories in countries such as Kenya during the 2007-2008 Post-Election Violence, empirical evidence from Burundi, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar show a blatant difference between this verbal affirmation and the massive human suffering that still typifies modern international politics. R2P is not a legal concept and its role in creating legal change is limited in international law. This means the reaffirmation of existing norms have a political twist. The application of R2P has significantly been affected by political discourses in the international prevention and reaction to human rights violations. The world has however, turned a blind eye on justifications given for interventions to stop atrocities or the lack of intervention which has led to violation of human rights across the world (Payandeh, 2010).

To this end therefore, there exists a need to assess the country specific dynamics that determine the applicability of the principle of the R2P and its efficacy in humanitarian issues ensuing from an armed conflict. It is against this background therefore, that this study generally examines the extent to which the doctrine of R2P has been effectively applied in responding to the crisis in Syria.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the doctrine of responsibility to protect has been effectively applied in responding to the Syrian crisis.

Specifically, this study seeks to:
1. Examine how the doctrine of R2P has been used in risk management in Syria
2. Find out how the presence of natural resources has influenced the application of R2P in Syria
3. Examine the effects of ethno-religious factors and hegemonic power politics on the implementation of R2P in Syria

1.4 Research Questions
1. How has the doctrine of R2P been used in risk management in Syria?
2. Has the presence of natural resources influence the application of R2P in Syria?
3. What is the effect of ethno-religious factors and hegemonic power politics on the implementation of R2P in Syria?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The importance of this study is to both the academic community in particular and to knowledge in general. The researcher notes that a range of studies focus on the application of R2P in global conflicts from the early 1990s. However, to the best of my knowledge, it is clear that most studies ignore the dynamics that have led to successful or unsuccessful application of R2P in conflict zones. These studies lacked a focus on the internal country specific dynamics (natural resources, ethno-religious composition) and how they influence the success or failure of the R2P. Further, there is need to connect these factors to the external factors (hegemonic power politics) as the literature points they have an influence on the application of R2P (Amin, 2015). This study therefore, fills this knowledge gap and contributes to the current knowledge concerning the principal of R2P.

This study is also of great use to policy makers as it shed more light on the application of R2P. It especially addresses issues surrounding how R2P should be applied to different societies with their intrinsic dynamics which have led to the failure of the R2P. To this end, policy makers will ably refer to the inferences made herein to develop plans of action based on the various complex dynamics.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study covers the period between 2011 and 2019. The year 2011 marked the entry point since it marks the beginning of the Arab Spring that led to interventions in Syria. This historic phenomenon has affected states and conflicts which have continue to date. Syria has remained largely unstable even after the application of R2P and therefore, this study limited itself to analyzing the country specific dynamics which influence the application of R2P in Syria. Further this study does not cover the change in U.S policy towards the end of 2019 which involves the withdrawal of US forces in Kurdish held areas of Northern Syria.

1.7 Literature Review

This section contains a brief overview of the UN Charter and its position on R2P. In addition, it gives a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the R2P and lastly, gives a general overview of the challenges facing the responsibility to protect. A range of empirical and

normative studies on the right to protect are clearly focused on bringing out the position of each author.

1.7.1 The United Nations Charter

The UN system is founded on the principle of sovereign equality of all member states. The UN charter recognizes that member states shall refrain from threatening or using force against one another. This also involves any other actions that may be in contradiction with purposes of the UN. All members of the UN are required to give the UN assistance in any actions it may take in line with the Charter. Further to this these states are required to refrain from assisting state against which the UN is taking action.

The Charter notes that the UN member states have a responsibility to protect their civilians from war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Also noted in the Charter's chapter VI and VII, it is the international community responsibility through the UN system, to apply diplomatic, humanitarian, and any other peaceful methods to protect civilians from the aforementioned atrocities. It is also worth noting that according to the Charter, there is no authorization to intervene in domestic matters of states. The UN Security Council has reaffirmed R2P in over 80 resolutions with Resolution 1674 (paragraphs 138 and 139) and Resolution 1894 (paragraphs 138 and 139). The UNSC through its country resolutions, has focused on R2P in Darfur (2006), Libya (2012), Yemen (2011), Mali (2013) and Sudan and South Sudan (2013) (Simma, 2002).

1.7.2 Review of Empirical Literature on the Application of R2P

Atilgan (2014) writes on the R2P and selective international intervention in the Arab Spring. The author argues that history is replete with massacres which the international system stood by and watched. It is arguable that decisions taken under international law concerning such atrocities remains controversial and these controversies are especially rife in the concepts and processes. The concept of intervention is one of the polarizing ones. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001 reported on R2P as an intervention for humanitarian purposes. The association of humanitarian intervention with military intervention has been changed by the emergence of R2P which is argued to reduce a humanitarian crisis. The author concludes that the concept and future of R2P are under test as theory and practice continue to diverge. The UN and NATO have applied R2P but with unsatisfactory outcomes. Further its

application in Libya raised disagreements as humanitarian intervention through military means was used to cloud the regime change agenda. Another case is the case in Syria where the complex dynamics at play have made the humanitarian and moral concept of R2P to be viewed with a lot of suspicion. This author dwells on the controversy surrounding R2P and its consequent application in world peace and security. The current study however, seeks to bring out its application in risk management and also compare the factors that influence its application in maintaining international peace and security using Syria as a case study.

On the other hand, Barnes and Tzevelekos (2016) argue that the concept R2P is an ambiguous and ambitious concept. They examine whether there is an argument beyond the allure engulfing R2P. They interrogate the spirit beyond its legal form and permissibility of the use of force and further interrogate how R2P can change sovereignty of states. It has challenged the traditional conception of state sovereignty and obliges states to act as the decentralized international system calls for all states to take responsibility. The current body of international law has evolved from a narrow model of sovereignty where self-help and reciprocity are prime to a broader system where collective articulation of common interests prevails. Collective enforcement of R2P by states marks a juncture in the international system where sovereignty is being applied individually and also collectively to defend interests of humanity which are common to all states. These authors concentrate on the legal and normative aspects of R2P and how it limits sovereignty of states. The paper neglects the empirical aspects of the concept therefore, limiting the analysis of its use in the process of preserving global peace and security. This paper therefore broadens this perspective and gives a practical aspect using the Syrian case.

Kahama (2015) analyses the three pillars of R2P and whether the UNSC is obliged to act in mass atrocities. The study notes that R2P was a consequence of the failure of states to act and sufficiently respond to abuse of human rights such as the one in Rwanda in 1994, inadequate intervention in Bosnia, and the unauthorized involvement in Kosovo. R2P diverts from the prior idea of intervention where militaries were involved and the UNSC had little say in the intervention. The author however, notes that inasmuch as R2P plays an important role in shaping responses to mass atrocities, it remains controversial especially when it comes to the implementation part. This is proven by the case of Syria where it continues to elicit debate. The study argues that the UNSC has an obligation to intervene in any atrocities and any inaction and

the vetoing that takes place in the Security Council authorizing intervention and application of R2P is an illegal act. R2P doctrine is covered with the idea of mandatory intervention but the UNSC objects mandatory action. This contravenes the mandates of the UNSC which has the mandate of maintaining global peace and security. The Council members are also obliged to cooperate and end crimes as stipulated under the R2P doctrine. This may involve non application of veto powers in order to enable application of R2P. The UNSC is the right authority to apply collective enforcement and implement the international community's R2P humanity against actual and incipient atrocities. This study varies from the current research as it is limited to debates surrounding the application of R2P in the UNSC. The current study will take this debate further and bring forth the debates among hegemonic powers both at a unilateral, bilateral and multilateral aspect. It will further bring out the influence of country specific factors that influence decision making on matters R2P.

According to Awais (2019) who writes on the failure of R2P in Syria, this conflict is one of the most complex. This far it is labelled the worst humanitarian crisis and the population has been left to the mercy of 'interest play' of the major global powers. In the conflict the Syrian government and external actors including the U.S and its allies have violated the sovereignty principle as captured in the UN charter. For more than eight years and eleven vetoes at the UN Security Council it is clear that the international community of states has failed to protect the Syrian people from atrocities as the conflict protracts. The U.S and Russia have made Syria a power projection ground and the application of R2P has not been successful as loopholes in this principal have allowed countries to manipulate it for state interests and not for achievement of peace. This has been referred to as a dilemma of invitation-intervention verses responsibility-interest. R2P has several shortcomings that affect its application. The redefinition of sovereignty makes it impossible to have a universal definition of responsibility.

The conceptualization of R2P did not also address the issue of seeking permission from the host state and who is illegible to intervene. R2P is also shrouded with a flaw on the issue on when intervention should be taken. This has been left vague and allows states to intervene based on state interests and regional power politics. Last is the issue of authority to authorize application of force. Here, the UNSC is the first ultimate decision maker followed by the UNGA. However, regional players and organizations also have a right and this results in clash of interests between

global and regional powers. This author overly focuses on the Syrian crisis. This limits the findings and it is this lean scope that informs the current study which seeks to further update the literature from recent unfolding situations affecting the application of R2P in Syria. This will bring out the subtle underlying changes in this case.

The aforementioned challenges are further reiterated by Amin (2015) who writes on the application of R2P with a terrorism perspective in Syria. The paper argues that the situation in Syria has presented a rather complex scenario that has made the application of R2P limited. The author notes that the Middle East has multiple competing allegiances and identities which have an influence on the application of R2P in the region. Almost all states in the region, except Israel, are members of regional organizations like the Organization of Islamic Conference, Arab League and Gulf Corporation Council. These states view R2P as a western idea and a facade by western powers to hide their imperial and neocolonial agendas. R2P especially in the areas where terrorist groups such as Al Nusra Front, ISIL and Al Qaeda operate is apparent as these groups contribute to the current humanitarian crisis. In the case of Libya, application of R2P was rather easier as the government was conducting killings on its people. But in Syria the situation was different as both the government and terrorist organizations are equally involved in the atrocities. However, it is critical to note that R2P in Libya saw rebel actors help fulfill the doctrine while the opposition in Syria is made up of terrorist organizations. Application of R2P to address terrorism can be integral in meeting the peace and security needs of the Middle East especially in the Syrian case. This paper focuses on the hegemonic power play in the Middle East and also the application of R2P in cases where terrorist groups are involved. The current study will however, build on this and aptly capture the regional together with the global hegemonic power politics that influence application of R2P in the Middle East.

Ayodeji (No Date) critiques the role of R2P and argues that R2P as a framework for humanitarian intervention has failed to fulfill its mandate. This has been mainly due to the inefficient implementation by the UN and the UNSC to be particular. The history of external intervention for human protection remains controversial and the cases of Somalia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Rwanda, Syria and Libya show its application is a failure. The current case of Libya indicates that R2P has not met all the three principals it holds as its application in rebuilding

Libya is a total catastrophe. R2P has set Libya on a path to becoming a failed state. Failure of R2P in Syria has seen the growth of terrorist groups such as ISIL therefore, escalating the conflicts to unmanageable levels. The anarchy in Syria has afforded terrorist organizations to spill into other areas and continents therefore further endangering international peace and security. This scholar focuses more on the failures of R2P and the consequent lack of global peace and security. Therefore, the paper neglects the very causes that dictate the failure. It is this section that will be captured in the current study which will address this.

Hehir (2010) also critiques R2P. He argues that it is a political and not a legal obligation which should be obeyed. Intervention in a particular state is highly influenced by the president or the decision makers as shown in the Libya crisis where the French president, Sarkozy, supported intervention and described it as an absolute exception. This led to the French taking charge of the command as the president had the will to intervene for political reasons. The author also posits that the currency of the term R2P obscures the hollowness behind it. Historically, grandiose declarations such as 'never again' used for the holocaust and genocide have demonstrated little or no practical application as human beings continue to face terror and deaths. Therefore, inasmuch as R2P has changed the discourse around humanitarian intervention, it has little to show. The current regime of R2P does not significantly reform the system it was meant to transform. This author further argues that the unsuccessful mounting of an international response in the Darfur crisis since 2003 is also evident to the failures of applying R2P and this was captured by the UN SG Kofi Annan who stated in the World Summit of 2005 that "international response is slow, hesitant, uncaring and we have learnt nothing from Rwanda". The transformation of R2P from 2005 to 2009 did not change the configuration of international law on matters of sovereign responsibility, use of force and the threshold warranting an intervention. It remains an idealistic belief based on moral pressure to change how states operate and this makes it impossible to achieve success.

In analyzing R2P in Libya and Syria, Justin (2013) argues that Libya and Syria are curious paradoxes in the applicability of R2P. The doctrine was barely justified in Libya and this brings forth the dangers inherent in its use. The UNSC debated over its application in Syria ended up in inaction while in Libya action was hastily taken. The author argues that politics shapes the use of R2P especially its form, speed and intensity of intervention and response. Application of the

responsibility to protect is highly dependent on the five permanent members of the UNSC and their collective interests in stopping mass atrocities. The vetoes by Russia on U.S and its allies are an indication of diverging interests and the historical suspicions levelled on western action. This study concentrates on the power dynamics and interests at the UNSC therefore, leaving out the internal country dynamics that inform unilateral and bilateral actions by the great powers. The current study will therefore, bring in this new aspects and update the literature to recent events.

According to Kersten (2014) there is a brewing argument on whether Russia can apply R2P in Ukraine. The work argues that the Russian intervention in Ukraine, which the country justified using the R2P doctrine, is yet another contentious case that brings the issue of great power politics to light. Russia cited the protection of the people of Crimea from tyranny and violence using all necessary means. The Foreign Ministry stated that there was need to protect its citizens and compatriots and fundamental human rights. However, the intervention glossed with R2P language, violated the sovereignty of Ukraine including its political independence and also its territorial integrity. This cases show the double standards and hegemonic power politics at play as Russia violates Ukraine's sovereignty through unilateral decisions while at the same vetoing intervention in Syria citing need for UNSC approval. Such crisis exposes the weaknesses of R2P as it is continually abused and misappropriated to justify state interventions and invasions. This has weakened R2P as a concept exposing its weak and un-precise nature. This study is geographically limited to Ukraine therefore limited. This calls for the current study to broaden current literature to cases such as Syria which significantly vary from Ukraine which remains in the sphere of influence of the Russian Republic.

Another major blow on the doctrine of R2P has been served by Akoro (2015) who asserts that considerations before the application of R2P have made the principle difficult to be applicable in all crisis situations. Its application should be solely based on legal eligibility, mass atrocities and state inability to offer protection to its population. However, the principles are subject to inconsistent usage such as the case in Georgia where Russia interfered basing argument on human rights. This is also consistent with the French intervention in Myanmar citing though the French premised their argument on natural disaster which is not within the scope of R2P. It is argued that R2P gives states opportunities to breach state sovereignty and embolden

interventions. Further to this the intervening states are driven by their national interests. Contentions around application of R2P include the factors that determine when it is applied. Legal issues, strategic forces and pragmatism convince that the concept is a tool for western imperialism. This paper limits the scope of academic view as it neglects the rich R2P cases consequent of the Arab Spring. This will therefore, be focused on by the current study.

In furthering the Middle East case, Hehir (2015) in his works examines whether Bahrain is an R2P blind spot. He asserts that the Arab Spring brought forth an intense debate regarding the efficacy of R2P in the Middle East. He argues that Bahrain has been largely ignored as the international community averted its attention as the government cracked down on people maiming and killing some in the 2011 uprising. The crimes against humanity in Bahrain included murder, deprivation of liberty, persecution of groups and causing suffering, mental and body injuries on a civilian population. These state sponsored violation of human rights especially targeted prodemocracy protestors and also the Shia in the country. Despite the extensive evidence presented by states, human rights groups and UN agencies the application of R2P in Bahrain has been remote. The UNSC has neglected the case and has barely made a statement on the crisis. The UN Secretary General issues 15 statements which reiterated the need for resolving the crisis peacefully but failed to mention use of R2P. Non-application of R2P in Bahrain has a lot to do with geopolitics. The country is an ally of the UK and US. A US naval fleet is based there and the Monarch is a critical arms market. Bahrain is also a national strategic ally of the UK as it provides a home for UK naval assets in the Gulf region. Bahrain also has friendly relations with Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Western states in the region. These factors were crucial in determining the application of R2P in Bahrain as western interests and perspectives coupled with the geostrategic position of the country were in play. The case of Bahrain provides an example of non-application of R2P and the consequent negative implication it has on its efficacy. The study by Hehir remains a rich and recent piece that explores a single country scenario. The current study will however, expand the frame and delve into the Syrian case that therefore, bringing out country dynamics and hegemonic interests surrounding R2P.

Tobing (2015) argues that R2P as a doctrine brought a new perspective in the international order but the dilemma on state sovereignty and human rights issues continues. The fact that ISIL is not a state changes the very perception of use of R2P. The authority to militarily intervene as

approved by the 2005 World Summit, was to be conducted in circumstances including genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In this case ISIL violated all these making R2P applicable. Syria has failed to fight ISIL and the government has also failed in maintaining domestic peace and security. The international community has therefore, been pulled into this case as it has a moral responsibility. The international community has legitimacy in responding to the ISIS threat and the U.S has applied offshore balancing strategy where the responsibility for regional security against ISIS is transferred to its Middle East allies who are now charged with balancing and neutralizing the threat. However, the intervention is limited to arming and assisting ally troops to increase their capacity to combat ISIL. This study is more inclined to Syria and overly concentrates on state sovereignty and terrorist groups. The current study will however, switch to other internal aspects of a country that influence the application of R2P. These include the ethno-religious factor and resources in a country. It will further broaden to external influences such as hegemonic power politics that inform the application of R2P.

Dalal (2013) writes on R2P in Libya and opines that the reactions and responses surrounding the Arab Spring raised eyebrows especially the use of R2P in Libya. It was the first point that the UNSC authorized use military force on a sovereign state. However, the same has not been applied in Syria and it remains unclear why the UNSC has failed to authorize R2P. The humanitarian crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) which was ethnic and cultural based presented a challenge. The multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Bosnian society (Serbs, Bosniaks and Croatians) went into a conflict which was addressed by the UN through creation of safe zones and distribution of humanitarian relief. Peace was achieved after a NATO military action led by the US intervened. The inaction by the UN led to loss of civilian lives. This situation was replicated in Rwanda where the UNSC failed to ensure peace and security prevailed as the multicultural society of Rwanda went into an abyss as Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups massacred each other. The response of the UNSC in East Timor is however, a different case where an international force (UNTAET) was created to respond. The case of Darfur where tribal tensions sparked conflicts also warranted the application of R2P but the peacekeeping missions deployed failed. The Syrian crisis has been affected by the religious, ethnic and tribal divisions which are more evident compared to the dynamics in other states. Further to this international action has been made complex by power politics where powerful countries seek to protect their national

interests in Syria. The scholar however wrote in 2013 and this leaves a lacuna that the current study will update and bring out the evolution of R2P in Syria.

Gurbuz (2016) also focuses on the Middle East and discusses the airstrikes in Syria from the perspective of R2P. He argues that widespread massive human rights violation by ISIS in the Middle East led to action by the international community to avert further crisis in the region. In Syria, the current structure of international law which prohibits the use of force except when authorized by the UNSC has failed to avert gross violation of human rights. This has led to proposed adoption of R2P but this has also not gained traction to stop the crisis. This study was conducted in 2016 and may therefore, be limited on a time scope. This creates the need to update the literature in order to broaden the academic perspective and the dynamics that complicate the application of R2P.

This issue is brought closer home by Lea-Henry (2018) who writes on R2P arguing the problem of political will is integral in this talk. The author argues that this concept was created in order to overcome state sovereignty as a barrier to humanitarian interventions. The Sovereignty of states as a legal and normative barrier prevented the international community from stopping the mass atrocities happening in particular jurisdictions. However, the application of R2P has had limitations and it has failed entirely due to the lack of political will. Some notable cases on the application of R2P such as Kenya, have been largely successful as it prevented the escalation of violence following a disputed presidential election in 2007 which had caused deaths and displacement of people. He concludes that in Kenya, the doctrines content and threshold for application was not justifiable as the death and crimes on humanity were still low. This study has a focus on Kenya where R2P was successful. However, the current study will focus on situations where R2P has failed to achieve its intended aim such s Syria.

Scholars such as Owuor and Wisor (2014) write that the role of the private sector in promoting peace in Kenya has been neglected. The private sector crafted a sustained, systematic and comprehensive campaign that contributed to the peaceful nature of the electoral process. The study showed how private businesses and proper business regulation contribute to prevention of violations of R2P. Businesses have a motive to prevent atrocities as this affects the business environment and human capital. Further, the businesses associated with atrocities suffer negative

impacts. This study focuses on the place of private sector in peace building and application of R2P. This varies from the current study which seeks to consider the failed cases in the application of R2P and the place of powerful countries in this process.

In his writing on Kenya, Lea-Henry (2018) states that the Kenyan case on the application of R2P was unwarranted compared to other cases where use of R2P was required but never applied. These cases include Mali where intervention was made by France after failure to use R2P. Other cases include Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, North Korea and in Guinea where there was reluctance to apply the doctrine of responsibility to protect. Another serious case is the international negligence of the human rights violation in the Gaza strip where Israel has continually violated human rights. In 2009 at the UNGA this issue was raised as needing R2P application. However, intervention has never taken place therefore, bringing to light the selective application of R2P and double standards in choosing where it should be used. This clearly shows both empirical and institutional failure of R2P. This study critiques the application of R2P in Kenya which did not warrant its application. It diverts from the current research which focuses on failed cases on the application of R2P.

1.7.3 Challenges Facing the Application of R2P

Cirkovic (2017) asserts that the responsibility to protect faces challenges in its application. First is its unilateral application by states without UN authorization. This has especially been applied for political means by some states. Between 2011 and 2013 the U.S attempted to bypass UNSC resolutions invoking R2P in order to rationalize its military intervention vetoed by Russia and China. The case against the U.S stated that R2P had been abused and used for "regime change" in Libya.

Bellamy (2008) argues that R2P is challenged by the confusion regarding it and non-consensual military intervention. It is further argued that R2P is a sophisticated method of conceptualizing and legitimizing humanitarian intervention. There is a widely held view that the responsibility to protect legalizes and legitimizes humanitarian intervention without UNSC authorization.

Shanahan (2011) criticizes the selective and inconsistent application of R2P. This criticism focuses on the difference in the way members of the UNSC especially the US, UK and France react to humanitarian crises. This is especially in recent crises experienced in Darfur, Libya and

Syria where selective application of R2P is clearly evident. These cases indicate the responsibility to protect has been hijacked by powerful countries. It has been applied selectively therefore, opening it up to criticism as a method used for western interference in the developing world's internal political affairs.

1.7.4 Summary

While literature shows that R2P is a framework for humanitarian intervention, it has not realized its full potential particularly in its application in conflicts in countries including Somalia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Rwanda, Syria and Libya. This signifies its application has not fulfilled its intended objectives in many cases therefore, making it generally a failure. The aforementioned idea holds as the doctrine is prone to abuse in interventions 'clothed as' R2P. To this end therefore, the question of whether R2P is a form of imperialism and hypocrisy by western states is brought forth especially in lieu of the previous applications of R2P in Syria, Libya and Kenya and its non-application in places such as the Gaza Strip in Israeli-occupied Palestine. R2P interventions however, are largely selective due to geopolitical and resource interests thus implying that R2P is applied when the national interests of a state merge with an enabling environment and which means that R2P may either succeed or fail depending on the factors and actors' interests at play.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study employs two theories in nuancing an understanding of the country specific dynamics that influence the applicability of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and its efficacy in humanitarian issues ensuing from an armed conflict.

1.8.1 Structural Realism

The structural strand of realism theory of international relations views the international arena as a competitive and hostile stage where national interests reign supreme. The main proponents include John Waltz who argues that a multipolar system is complicated due to the comparative capabilities of states. Other major proponents include Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer. Walt argues that changes in the sub-national level affect the larger levels in the international system (Walt, 1997). On the other hand, Mearsheimer focuses on great power behavior in the international system and argues that great powers use various strategies to meet specific goals in

certain environments. Structural changes in the international system affect state behavior and outcomes of their interactions. To structural realism, it is the structure or architecture of the international system that forces states to pursue their national interests aggressively. In a system where there is no global government that sits above states and where there is no guarantee that one will not attack another, it makes good sense for each state to advance its own interests. In essence, the structural realists argue that states are trapped in an iron cage where they have little choice but to advance their own interests if they hope to survive (Waltz, 1979). Structural realists argue that states can go to war for diverse reasons. States can go to war to gain power or control over other states and in the process, enhance their security. Further a state can go to war for ideological or economic reasons meaning non-security reasons are also paramount (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In this regard, even when states seek to advance liberal interests such as the pursuance of R2P principles, their behavior is largely influenced by the environment they operate in. Structural realism thus focuses on a system composed of a structure and interacting units such as the individual, the state and the system but with the underlying structure of the international system being the main feature.

1.8.2 Man-Milieu Hypothesis

Postulated by Harold and Margaret Sprout, the man-milieu hypothesis, also known as the environmental theory of international relations advances the notion that to understand foreign policy decision making, one needs to look at the 'psycho-milieu' of the persons and groups of persons making those decisions. 'Psycho milieu' refers both to the environment surrounding the decision-makers and how it is perceived and interpreted by them (Sprout and Sprout, 1956).

When environmental factors are perceived and taken into account, they will influence and to a certain extent shape the preferences and values of the decision maker, and therefore, his or her final decision (Gold, 1978). In the context of R2P, a man-milieu approach would see country specific dynamics influence the applicability of the principle of R2P in humanitarian issues ensuing from an armed conflict.

These two theories complement each other in addressing country dynamics that influence the application of R2P. Structural realism addresses states national interests as key aspects that

influence application of R2P. The man-milieu hypothesis on the other hand compliments structural realism as it considers environmental factors that influence an agent to apply R2P. Therefore, these theories neatly fuse the internal as well as external influences that dictate the application of R2P.

1.9 Methodology

1.9.1 Study Design

This refers to the framework used while conducting a research. It includes the procedures and procedural framework for obtaining data needed to address the research problems of a study. This study applies a case study research design. This design entails studying social phenomena in detail and intensity in order to bring out its unique features (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, the context of the application of R2P in Syria was studied comprehensively enabling the researcher to bring out the subtle issues in the country.

1.9.2 Study Site

Syria is located in Western Asia and lies between latitudes 32° and 38° N, and longitudes 35° and 43° E. It borders Lebanon to the southwest, Turkey to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Iraq to the east, Israel to the southwest and Jordan to the south. Its geography has plains, mountains and deserts. The Euphrates is Syria's most important river. Syria comprises one of the fifteen states referred to as the 'cradle of civilization' (CIA World Factbook, 2019). See Appendix 1

Syria has diverse ethnic and religious groups. Ethnic groups include Arabs, Circassians, Assyrians, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Mandeans and Turkmens. The religious groups in the country are Sunnis, Christians, Salafis, Alawites, Druze, Ismailis, Mandeans, Shiites, Yazidis, and Jews. Sunnis are the largest religious group in the country. The modern Syrian state dates to mid-20th century following centuries of Ottoman empire rule in the region and a brief period French mandate. Syria is the largest Arab state that emerged out of the Ottoman-ruled Syrian provinces. It gained de jure independence and became a parliamentary republic in October, 1945 (CIA World Factbook, 2019).

Syria is currently a unitary republic with 14 governorates. The country politically espouses Ba'athism which was adopted after the 1963 Ba'athist coup d'état. The Ba'ath Party has been in power to date. The country's constitution, adopted in 2012, transformed the political system to a semi-presidential republic with a President as Head of State and Prime Minister as Head of Government (CIA World Factbook, 2019).

The country depends on oil and agriculture. Petroleum is one of the main income earners and it gained prominence as a leading natural resource and main export after 1974. It's most important oil fields are located in Suwaydiyah, Rumayian, Qaratshui and Tayyem. Petroleum became Syria's. Natural gas on the other hand was discovered in 1940 at Jbessa (CIA World Factbook, 2019).

1.9.3 Data collection

This study relies on secondary data to address its objectives. Secondary data used is both qualitative and quantitative data extracted from books, journals, government and organization reports, newspaper articles, periodicals as well as other published materials documented by scholars, analysts and institutions. These materials were reviewed in order to gather data on the application of R2P in Syria. The choice of data is defined first at the temporal parameters. It is also informed by the relevance in terms of answering to the thematic areas identified in the research's objectives. Secondary data from the application of the doctrine of R2P in Africa will be used to juxtapose the applicability of R2P in Syria in lieu of the need to understand resource dynamics and R2P application in conflicts in third world states.

1.9.4 Data analysis

This study analyzes secondary data gathered through content analysis. Books, journals, periodicals, newspaper articles, government and organization reports will be analyzed. The data was analyzed by first categorizing it into issues regarding the study objectives. The information gathered was further synthesized into limited sets of attributes composing the variables of the study. The cross cutting themes were noted and used to make general inferences regarding the application of R2P in Syria.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOCTRINE OF R2P AND ITS APPLICATION IN RISK MANAGEMENT IN SYRIA

2.1 Introduction

The chapter locates Syria in the wider geopolitics of the ME region. It further examines the doctrine of R2P in the UN system, explores the application of R2P in conflict risk management in Syria and finally, assesses the failures of R2P in risk management in Syria.

2.2 Syria in the Geopolitics of the ME Region

Geopolitics denotes the intersection of geography, power, and foreign policy. The academic issue area concentrates on the interplay between states as the fundamental units of international relations, borders, resources, peoples, milieus, trade routes, as well as human traffic. Owing to political mutations that herald new geopolitical alignments, the aforementioned factors evolve and mutate into a new geopolitics that are gradually reconfigured (Amirahmadi, 2017). With regard to the geopolitics of the Middle East, the region which serves as an intersection between Europe, Asia and Africa has always remained an attraction point for major powers largely enticed by its geostrategic importance and colossal energy potency. Combining the same with the conflations of ethnicities, religious nationalities and mutations of the latter has heralded the region into a war tone zone facing various wars and crises that make the states in Middle Eastern region antagonize each other and even allowing outside regional powers to play a role in the various conflicts (Zulfqar, 2018).

According to Amirahmadi (2017), the modern age of the Middle East is characterized by a transition into a third wave of geopolitics, a key character of the political geography of the region since the end of the Cold War. The first wave was espoused within the very collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War. This was followed by the second wave which followed the period when the European colonial order crumbled after the end Second World War. On the other hand, the third wave is characterized by a multi polar hegemonic order in the Middle East. Another key characteristic of the third wave is the spread of political disarray characterized by humiliated peoples, failed states, extreme inequality and poverty at the micro and meso levels, crippled economies at the macro level, pillaged resources, distraught

environments, conflicted geographies, external intrusions, and violent radicalism (Amirahmadi, 2017).

While America has been an overlord in the region, other external actors have been inserting themselves into the region's convoluted decision-making system. In lieu of the foregoing, a new geopolitical structure has been mooted with six primary countries, namely; Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Israel, the United States, and Russia playing significant roles in the region. On the one hand, Iran and Saudi Arabia are enmeshed in a tag of war seeking to balance and out-wedge each other while Israel seeks to halt both Iran's nuclear and regional influence as well as engage in a conflict managerial approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is worth noting that Israel shares a strategic objective of containing Iran with her next-door neighbor, Saudi Arabia. However, Arab public sentiments restrict the depth Saudi-Israeli cooperation. On the other hand, Turkey has a dual Islamic-nationalist strategy while Russia seeks to protect its state sovereignty and that of its key allies as well as gain more influence undercutting the United States by projecting its military might (Brookings Institution, 2019).

The Russian interest in the Syrian theatre can be seen to be influenced by Russia's hopes to entrench itself in the Middle East's convoluted regional politics. Russia's interest may also be concerned with the need to harness the fermentation of Islamic unrest at the very source lest this be used to inspire unrest by Islamist networks and insurgents, the risk of 'blowback' to Russia being overly exaggerated notwithstanding. Secondly, in propping up the pariah regime of Bashar al Assad, Moscow seeks to use the case to rally a new age of revolt against the erosion of state sovereignty by the West seeking regime change. These legitimization standards do not favour Russia or other authoritarian states (Allison, 2013).

According to Gause (2014), the unsettling political statement from the success of the democratization of Islamic politics as enshrined by the electoral success of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia in the wake of the Arab Spring was unsettling to the Saudi monarchy. Coupled by the inability of Ankara and Riyadh to form a powerful Islamic axis, a pointer to an intra-Sunni Islamist clash over political order heralds a paradoxical and complex cold war in the Middle East. Furthermore, the quest to control regional politics and conflicts through covert and overt support to non-state actors in their domestic political battles within the

weak states of the Arab world has largely been disadvantageous to Israel and Turkey while Qatar and Iran have had an outsized influence (Gause, 2014).

2.3 The Syrian Conflict and the Ensuing Humanitarian Crisis

The Syrian crises can be traced back to the pro-democracy and protests that started in 2011 in the wake of the upheavals for the democratization of the political space in Arab countries in what is otherwise known as the Arab Spring that engulfed the Middle East and the Maghreb. The protests erupted in Dara'a city in March 2011. This prompted government forces to open fire on demonstrators. The demonstrations escalated leading to an escalation of response from the Syrian government often punctuated by a violent and lethal response to quash the demonstrations. By late 2011 when the pro-democracy demonstrations and protests had mutated into armed violence. By 2012, the country was degenerating into a full-blown civil war with government forces committing a number of mass killings on civilian non-combatants during military assaults. Due to Sunni defections within the military as well as increased capacity of armed groups to attack government units, the Syrian military changed anti-demonstration tactics and rarely engaged in ground attacks (UN General Assembly, 2015).

This was followed by a regime sustenance strategy that entailed attacks on restive areas by encircling an area. This included the setting up of checkpoints at all access points; secondly, there was the imposition of sieges. These sieges prevented and inhibited the flow of food, medical supplies. Other measures employed by the Syrian regime included the shelling and aerial bombardment of besieged areas; the arrest, and often disappearance, of wounded persons who were attempting to leave besieged areas. This strategy has been dubbed the "*tansheef al bakhar*" strategy i.e., that of draining the sea to kill the fish (UN General Assembly, 2015).

2.4 The Humanitarian Risk in Syria

According to Colonna (2017), the human cost of the Syrian conflict is immeasurable. War crimes as well as crimes against humanity such as the forcible transfers of population, mass starvations have been committed with reckless abandon with Syrian citizens suffering violations and abuses from various actors. As the conflict keeps on escalating and becoming protracted, so has the scale of human suffering which has steadily and consistently grown. Civilian non-combatants have been victims of the conflict. While women and children have been targeted, military aged men including minors have been the main victims of violence through military attacks, arrest and

detention as they are seen as either sleeper cells of combatants or potential recruits. According to the UN, 85.1 % of the victims documented in the Syrian conflict were male (Colonna, 2017; UN General Assembly, 2015).

Furthermore, the Syrian military has also engaged in mass arrest campaigns particularly of fighting age men including minors. Men of fighting age who are residing in or travelling to government-held areas have also been heavily targeted. According to Adams (2015), owing to threats against their person, a refusal to disclose information about the fate of the disappeared or compulsion to pay large bribes to learn of the whereabouts of relatives, families of disappeared and/or detained persons are often too afraid to approach the authorities to enquire about the whereabouts of their relatives. In addition, detained men have been constantly subjected to sexual violence not only as a punishment but also as a means to humiliate and degrade (Adams, 2015).

2.5 The Doctrine of R2P and Its Application in Risk Management in Syria

2.5.1 The UN Conflict Mitigation System and R2P in Syria

As a global commitment to global peace, the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has been central to the international discourse on how to respond to mass atrocity crimes in Syria particularly within the UN system (Adams, 2015). The United Nations Conflict Mitigation System has been lethargic in addressing the Syrian conflict. After more than two years of inaction on the Syrian crisis, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 in September 2013. This UNSC Resolution called for the need for the verification and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles. In addition, the resolution called for the convening of the second Geneva peace talks on Syria while acquiescing to the establishment of a transitional governing body with full executive powers. However, this was not followed by anything concrete with the conflict going on unabated (UN General Assembly, 2015).

In 2014, in the wake of the worsening humanitarian crisis, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution number 2139 requesting all parties to the Syrian conflict to allow humanitarian access across conflict lines, in besieged areas and across borders. The resolution's scope was broadened with the adoption of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2165 which authorized cross-border and cross-line access for the United Nations and its partners to

deliver humanitarian aid without the consent of the Syrian state. This was buttressed by the United Nations Security Council resolution 2191 which renewed the authorization of humanitarian aid to use routes across conflict lines.

It is also worth noting that the United Nations' system has been anything but united. This is because it has been characterized by fractured relations within the Security Council resulting in difficulties when trying to address the issue of Syria. One of this has often been the result of the employment of vetoes by Russia and China to stop key resolutions from being passed is also a factor in the Syrian conflict. on the one hand, Russia has used its veto on the Syrian issue eight times while China has employed the same six times (ECR2P, 2019). With regard to the European Union, the regional body has largely shied away from a military solution seeing the Syrian conflict as largely a political one. As such, the European Union has been developing a Syrian intervention strategy centred on ending the civil war with the help of the UN. In furthering these ends, the European Union has taken restrictive measures against Syria through economic and political sanctions.

2.5.2 Synthesizing the failure of R2P in risk management in Syria

As we have aptly seen, the United Nations Conflict Mitigation System has been lethargic in addressing the Syrian conflict. It is only two years into the Syrian crisis did the Security Council adopt a resolution calling for the need to verify and destroy Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles. However, this was not followed by anything concrete with the conflict going on unabated. Furthermore, in the wake of the worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2014, rather than implement or at least follow up on its own resolutions, the United Nations Security Council would pass on another resolution seeking to have the parties to the Syrian conflict to allow humanitarian access. However, this was sadly not followed up by concrete actions leaving the Syrian people to their own devices (UN General Assembly, 2015).

To Adams (2015), the problem with the doctrine of R2P in Syria stems from the fact that it is merely an international norm devoid of an independent enforcement agency. As such, the author postulates, the failure of the doctrine of R2P to stop atrocities in Syria is not a failure of the doctrine per se but that of the imperfect actors and institutions responsible with its implementation. A good example is the vetoes employed by Russia and China to block action in

response to mass atrocity crimes in Syria. These vetoes served to strengthen impunity and encouraged the expansion of war crimes and crimes against humanity (Adams, 2015).

In assessing the impact of the Syrian crisis on the R2P doctrine, Colonna (2017) argues that the applicability of the doctrine failed to positively influence decision making in the highest echelons of international diplomacy. This largely stems from the failures of R2P in Libya where it was used to mask political interventions and particularly NATO's un-mandated regime change in Libya. This infection, Colonna (2017) opines, has been so great that in its current form, R2P no-longer has a place in facilitating humanitarian intervention (Colonna, 2017).

According to As (2013), the international community's reluctance in invoking the doctrine of the responsibility to protect in order to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in Syria was largely informed by the fact that the doctrine of the responsibility to protect which fails to attract a critical mass of consensus within the international community particularly in case specific areas such as Syria. As such, there is a lack of political will to intervene in the situation in Syria. In addition, As (2013) further postulates, the attendant lack of consensus is caused by the protection of the national interests of the states involved, especially the security of their sovereignty (As, 2013).

This is reiterated by Welsh (2016) who argues that despite the commitment made by all heads of state on their commitment to upholding the doctrine of the responsibility to protect particularly in humanitarian risk management, atrocious crimes continue to be committed by states and non-state actors with contempt and impunity. However, Welsh cautions on the assessment of the effectiveness of the doctrine of R2P due to the tendency to overlook the political nature of the principle. Welsh sees the cases Syrian case as one that raises fundamental questions about the prospect of catalyzing international efforts to protect populations, particularly when there is disagreement over the costs and benefits of a coercive response (Welsh, 2016).

According to Chester Crocker, intervening in conflicts with a humanitarian objective is largely pegged on three factors. These factors include the intervening nation's own capabilities and connection to the conflict. In addition, the status and ripeness of the conflict for resolution is also a key consideration while the characters of the parties and their decision-making systems. Furthermore, Crocker also advocates for a closer attention on a fourth factor which he says is

overly glossed over but should on the contrary be given increased attention; intervening states should compare the cost of intervention to the cost of doing nothing (Crocker, 1996).

With Crocker's (1996) analysis in mind, Nasser-Eddine (2016) argues that country specific issues have bedevilled conflict risk management in syria under the auspices of the doctirne of the responsibility to protect. First, the syrian regime under Bashar al Assad is a militarily strong regime with which regime change intervention militarily would be huge. With a long Russian commitment to the Assad regime; and strong Syrian armed forces with a credible air-defense system, any military intervention in Syria would be difficult and bloody. As such, there isn't an appetite, and not a budget, in the Western world for the sort of intervention that would be involved in a Syrian military action to enforce the responsibility to protect. Secondly, the Syrian conflict and the ensuing humanitarian crisis is in a very different geopolitical environment where there is no unanimity from the regional body, the Arab League, in favour of tough action. Furthermore, the Syrian conflict has mutated into a i-level proxy war thus presenting a security dilemma for its immediate neighbours (Nasser-Eddine, 2016).

Another regional geopolitical dilemma with international implications is the fact that Bashar Assad's regime is fighting for its survival with the assistance of Russia, Iran and China in effect threatening the security of her immediate neighbours such as Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Any intervention will also likely affect the immediate neighbours directly. Furthermore, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious makeup of Syria lends itself to cross-border interaction, its geostrategic position attracts big power interests, and the potential political vacuum that will arise post-Assad attracts the ambitions of regional powers in the Middle East (Nasser-Eddine, 2016).

The doctrine of R2P in Syria may have also been soiled by the non-humanitarian aspect of interventionism clothed in R2P. This includes the push for domestic politics at the regional or sub regional level, the quest for the consolidation and protection of foreign markets by regional, sub-regional or global hegemons as well as the creation of new ones, the very quest for hegemonic powers among other ulterior motives masked under the guise of humanitarianism in a given neutral interventionist policy. It would be thus imperative to examine the same.

As Earl Conteh-Morgan further contends, the ever-increasing negative effects of transnational social forces tends to generate the pervasive force of a neo-liberal cosmopolitan moral view of

international relations that increasingly sanctions both military and non-military interventions to maintain the existing structure of states and international society (Conteh-Morgan). A number of rationales have been postulated by scholars as to be the predominant driving motives for interventions by a given state in another country. These rationales traverse across the political, social and economic continuum.

2.6 Conclusion

There have been a number of attempts at addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria. This attempts have largely been rooted in the doctrine of R2P such as the UN's resolution numbers 2139, 2165 and 2191. However, these efforts have been inadequate due to the fact that R2P is merely an international norm devoid of an independent enforcement agency. As such, the failure of the doctrine of R2P to end atrocities and protect civilians in Syria is not a failure of the doctrine per se but that of the imperfect actors and institutions charged with its observance. Furthermore, the partisan usage of R2P to advance selfish interests in Libya where it was used to mask political interventions and particularly NATO's unauthorized change of regime in Libya have proved a barrier to effective usage of R2P. As such, in its current form, R2P is inadequate in the facilitation of humanitarian intervention.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURAL RESOURCES AND R2P IN SYRIA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the influence of natural resources on the application of R2P. It first explores the African dynamics where resources have dictated the use of R2P in some African countries. Secondly, the chapter covers Syria's natural resource, the role of resources in humanitarian interventions and the role of natural resources on the failure of R2P in Syria. It further examines Syria as a theatre of mineral and strategic resource competition by powerful states in the international system and how this has influenced the application of R2P.

3.2 Natural Resources and R2P in Africa

Bellamy (2005) asserts that it is important to take cognizance that while governments of great powers engage in R2P, they are not led by altruistic values but by the concept of national interest. National interests are cloaked in the language of R2P in order to promote neo-realist and also institutional-liberal objectives of these states. It is not politically nor militarily feasible to take action in territories where UNSC permanent member states and also major powers have no military, political or economic interests. The five permanent members are supposed to use veto powers to check on each other and prevent domination by a single member. The UNSC has however, been blamed for inaction especially in cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The selective application of R2P reinforces the idea that R2P is a Trojan horse. Some scholars have labeled it redecorated colonialism (Bellamy, 2005).

The application of R2P has elicited contentions across the globe. Apart from the case of Syria other cases for instance in African countries such as Libya remain contentious in world politics today. The military intervention supported by the western countries led by the United States and Great Britain was based on other interests and not necessarily on the humanitarian aspects of Libya. First and foremost was the political and economic situations in Britain and France which would be saved by a focus on Libya. For the U.S, past failures such as the Rwanda genocide could not be repeated by watching Libya disintegrate and record another humanitarian crisis. However, it is certain that the application of R2P is believed to have been considered first and foremost because of the natural resources in Libya including natural gas and oil. The control for

resources in Libya especially oil was the main trigger for intervention and the other causes are rhetoric that surround its use (O'Connell, 2011).

Another case that helps understand the application of R2P in natural resource rich states is the case of the Central African Republic (CAR). According to the Global Center for R2P (2015), the crisis in CAR that begun in 2012 led to the systematic targeting of largely Christian civilians by Muslim Seleka rebels. This caused a retaliation leading to formation of predominantly Christian and animist defence groups that targeted Muslim communities. This in turn caused an international military intervention by the international community to quell the conflicts triggered by religion and ethnicity. It has been observed that religious and ethnic diversity in the country have historically been manipulated by elites and armed groups competing to meet their political interests. Armed violence has been employed by these groups to attain political goals and expand their power. It is also evident that in the CAR conflict the desire for economic gain and control of natural resources propels conflicts. The country has a variety of natural resources that attract international attention due to their significance. These resources attracted an international intervention contributing to the application of R2P in the CAR.

Another country which has experienced protracted violent conflicts is Sudan which has been in turmoil for a rather long period of time. Williamson (2009) indicates that the state has disintegrated into one of the most extreme humanitarian crisis in the world today. This devastation has prolonged for decades but the international community has been slow to respond with a possible use of R2P being considered remote. This is even after the international community agreed to help states fulfill their R2P in a timely and decisive way.

Williamson (2009) further indicates that the lack or slow application of R2P is informed by the fact that powerful states countries as the U.S, her allies and the west in general do not have any vital strategic stakes in Sudan. Sudan as a country has minerals and oil but these resources have not attracted any interests from the U.S or Europe. These states do not envision and do not have strategic interests in Sudan therefore, creating a situation that has led to a humanitarian crisis. The absence of strategic importance of the natural resources in Sudan has put the country in a bad position as it does not attract concern by the international community.

The humanitarian crisis alone has not led to greater concerns that may trigger any meaningful and decisive action by powerful states. This is from the fact that Sudan's resources are of no

consequence to powerful states in the global arena. The situation is however, different at the Security Council level where China and Russia are involved. These global powers have defended the Sudan regime at the UNSC and this can be a factor of the strategic relations between these three states. Russia sells arms to Sudan while China imports 6% of her oil from Sudan. Inasmuch as these levels are insignificant, it has prompted these powerful states to consistently resist robust action in Sudan. The politics at the UNSC point to the history of the Security Council. This history has proven that if a veto power has strong bilateral interests in a conflict, then it becomes difficult and almost impossible for the UNSC member states to take a unilateral and strong action to end a crisis. The case of Sudan is testimony to the chronic failure of R2P and its framework in meeting its objectives. Further to this one may conclude that the R2P aspirations are rhetorically embraced but its empirical intentions remain a mirage especially when there are no strategic resources of interest for the major global powers (Williamson, 2009).

Bricmont (2009) challenges the intellectual assumptions of R2P arguing that its failure is a factor of policies and attitudes of the doctrines enthusiastic states, especially western counties. The main issue with it lies in the timely and decisive military response and also its challenge to national sovereignty. At the center of some of the interventions are resources which have led to humanitarian disasters such as the one in Congo. Western states have calculated and justified their interventions in Americas, Africa and Asia and covered up their crimes including systematic grabbing of land and resources. The West has claimed a right to intervene and protect while at the same time it has ignored repressive regimes and also engaged in massive exploitation of resources. Mawji (2016) notes that the Middle East for instance, has dictatorships considered by the west easier and efficient to deal with due to the petroleum security they offer. Dick Cheney recognized this through a statement indicating that oil and gas are situated in places where there are no democratically elected governments and the U.S has to deal with these governments in order to make western companies efficient and profitable especially in the MENA region.

Evidence points out that realist aims of states are the foundation of intervention in Libya and not the R2P. The intervention in Libya signifies the importance of Libya to the European energy market as Libya at the time held 46.4 billion barrels of oil deposits. After being cleared by the international community western energy companies sought to increase investments in Libya

especially its natural resources. The oil reserves in Libya are a rare kind that produces low Sulphur diesel making it attractive to most refineries globally. Libyan oil is also cheap to transport to Europe compared to Middle East oil and 85% of its oil is purchased by Italy, Spain, France and Great Britain. Further to this Libya has strategic natural gas reserves serving western states (Kazianis, 2011). Liberal thought has however, pointed to the fact that the deteriorating security situation in Libya needed to be addressed through international humanitarian intervention to prevent mass atrocities and violation of human rights. The remaining issue to date is the instability after the international intervention. Libya's post-conflict transition remains chaotic and unstable. The humanitarian aspect of R2P prospered but the doctrines ideal of helping rebuild remains unrealized (Giselle, 2015).

In Mali violation of human rights and the destruction of world heritage sites brought about debate on the application of R2P. The UN authorized a military force to retake the territory and address human rights violations. The UNSC through resolution 2085 supported political dialogue but there remain questions whether the intervention in Mali will address post conflict issues especially on matters of peacekeeping as the country remains divided and unstable (Rudolph, 2013).

3.3 Syria's Natural Resources

According to Leith (1925) minerals constitute the natural resource problem. As a country in the resource rich region of the Middle East, Syria is not only endowed with natural resources but also geostrategically positioned. Unlike other countries in the region, Syria is characterized by fertile plains as well as high mountains. As such, the country's economic pillars are agriculture, phosphate minerals, natural gas and oil. Agriculture and oil accounted for almost half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before to the uprising in 2011 (Owuor, 2019).

In Syria, oil was discovered in 1956 in Karachuk. Syria's proven oil reserve is estimated to be approximately two and a half billion barrels. This makes the Syrian crude oil reserve to be slightly higher and larger than all her neighbors with the exception of Iraq. However, the Syrian crude oil is peculiar in that it mainly consists of heavy, high-sulfur. As such, it is expensive to refine (Owuor, 2019). According to Owuor (2019) petroleum is one of the major contributors to the Syrian economy. Therefore, Syria's main income earner is energy as the country is home to

crude oil fields including natural gas reserves. Before the civil war in Syria in 2011, oil sales generated over $3.2 billion and accounted for about 25% of government revenue.

Syria is considered a relatively small oil producer as is accounts for only 0.5% of world oil production. To the Syrian government however, oil is a very essential contributor to the state budget and goes a long way in helping in the balancing of the books. Furthermore, before to the outbreak of war in 2011, it was the main source of hard currency raking in over $4 billion and roughly about a third of Syria's total export revenue. In earlier years, oil sales accounted for an even larger chunk of export receipts (Wood, 2013).

3.4 Syria as a Theatre of Resource Competition

This section elaborates Syria's background that continues to attract international attention from powerful states therefore, prolonging the conflict and violent conflict in the country. This has contributed to the slow and eventual failure of R2P by the international community and global powers for that case.

3.4.1 Syria as a Theatre of Mineral Competition and its Impact on R2P

Syria's natural resource configurations complicate humanitarian interventions as per the doctrine of the responsibility to protect. This is due to the fact that a bulk of Syria's oil is geographically located between Hassake province which is in the far northeast of the country an area predominantly occupied by Kurds. the other area is Deir Ezzor, a region deep in the far south of the country. The withdrawal of government troops from the oil town of Rumeilan located in Hassake Province led to unexpected scenes. Rather than an ensuing humanitarian caravan from the international community, the area was taken over by militias of the Democratic Union Party. These militias are commonly referred to by the Kurdish-language acronym PYD. This scenario has been replicated in other areas endowed with natural resources. In the complicated economy of the Syrian civil war, rebel groups have got hold of oil products that filter through government lines. This complicated humanitarian intervention under the doctrine of R2P in that the rebel units used the captured oil to pay for weapons. In the case of the Kurds, they leverage the same to prosecute a political diplomatic campaign for furnishing the northern region with greater autonomy (Wood, 2013).

At the regional level, the conflict has expanded into a regional affair owing to the Kurdish ethnic community which spreads across the countries of Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Turkey for instance has been less pleased with the unfolding political realities in the Kurdish majority areas of northern Syria. This is largely because the Kurdish militia in the Kurdish majority areas of northern Syria is inextricably linked to the Kurdish militias back home in Turkey and which has been the cause of major distress in Ankara. For the United States however, supporting the Kurdish militia in the Kurdish majority areas of northern Syria is the only way to maintain a grip on Syria. In addition, this will thwart any Iranian and Russian intentions. This has largely complicated humanitarian interventions under the doctrine of R2P.

3.4.2 Syria as a Theatre of Strategic Resource Competition and its Impact on R2P

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, interventions in the conflict have attracted regional actors (Iran and Saudi Arabia) as well as extra-regional actors (U.S, Russia, and the European Union). Also non-state actors such as the Hezbollah have also been roped in the Syrian conflict. Other actors include the internal ones such as the Kurdish militia, ISIS, the Free Syrian Army and the Alawite community that has historically operated as channels of external influence in the battle for the control of Syria as a geostrategic zone (Martini, York, & Young, 2013).

To Hatahet (2018) Russia and Iran which are the main military allies and supporters of the Assad regime, are engaged in competition for access to Syria's economy. These countries have a particular focus on prospects to obtain reconstruction contracts. Hatahet (2018) further argues that the two countries are also pursuing a larger role in the Syrian economy for instance through signing investment contracts for their conglomerates. In addition, they seek partial compensation for efforts especially military interventions. They also adopt an opportunity-based approach to the Syrian market. However, while the two countries are in Syria for the overall goal of asserting their support for the pariah government of Assad, the two countries are embroiled in a geostrategic competition (Hatahet, 2018).

According to Lister (2019) Russia's global position as a political mammoth coupled with Russia's role in Syria has complicated humanitarian efforts in Syria. This is due to the fact that while Russia continues to seek to rebuild the state and its core structures as well as recentralize the states authority over the arms of power, it has been embroiled in a competition with Iran as

Tehran also seeks to infiltrate and embed itself in Syria. This takes place as the country simultaneously seeks to build more influence (Lister, 2019).

Challenges of R2P present the UNSC an opportunity to reexamine the application of R2P to justify humanitarian interventions and responding to crisis through this means. There is need to develop and enhance UN procedures to understand how conflicts manifest and which means are more appropriate as response mechanisms. Further, this example shows the need to reevaluate R2P and develop a framework that abides by the resolutions mandate at the UNSC level. Lastly, there is need to address the economic and political interests at the UNSC when it comes to humanitarian interventions and the ensuing implications on application of interventions (Giselle, 2015).

3.5 Resources and Humanitarian Intervention in Syria

To understand the pivotal importance of resources in tilting the fulcrum of intervention, it is imperative to understand the complex nature of the international system. This is largely due to the fact that while it might be seen as a group of states interacting with one another, there are a series of multiple macro-level social interactions involving actors at various levels either involved in foreign policy decision making, for instance the individual decision makers, the bureaucracy, and the interest groups and/or environments influencing the foreign policy decision making process such as the societal level, or the international system itself (Andriole, 1979).

Interventions, even those of a humanitarian nature, are carried under the rubric of the intervening party's foreign policies. As such, country specific variables both on the part of the intervening force as well as on the part of the state where the conflict is taking place. According to Andriole (1979), the foreign policy of intervention is influenced by factors at the international, state or idiosyncratic levels. At the system level, the key variable in the international system is the power of a state. At the state level, the foreign policy behavior of intervention is largely influenced by the state's characteristics. For instance, if it is democratic, it will be unlikely to fight with other democracies but will be likely to intervene on humanitarian grounds (Andriole, 1979).

At the idiosyncratic level, the focus is on people who make decisions within states and therefore the individuals who make foreign policy decisions (Newmann, 2016). The decisions to intervene therefore, is influenced at several levels in a state and the prevailing decision collectively serves

the interests of the state. This level is however, checked by regional interests that govern state interactions as other interest groups and states in the region may influence decisions through regional mechanisms and international norms.

It is evident that despite the forthright initiatives of the international community, conflict intervention and in regards to humanitarian intervention in particular, incidents of violent conflicts persisted in the intervened conflict zones (Agu and Okeke, 2013; Cilliers, 2008). The case of Mali may provide useful lessons on Syria. This is because Mali is a perfect case of the machinations and politics behind humanitarian intervention missions. Rather than being altruistically motivated, it noted that humanitarian interventions in many conflicts are oftentimes characterized by parochial and selfish interests. One classic case is the case of the French in many West African countries like Mali. While stability in Mali may have been achieved as a result of these efforts by unilateral efforts by France, it came as secondary to the primary French interest which is to maintain its own economic stakes in Mali (Oluwadare, 2014).

3.6 Failure of the R2P in Syria

In as much as the success of R2P remains contested, it is worth noting that few achievements can be noted. In 2017 following a chemical weapons attack on civilians by Assad in Khan Sheikhun airstrikes targeting the regime airbase successfully deterred future use of chemical weapons. Another target in 2018 by the western powers against military targets in Syria were critical in neutralizing the regime. These steps were critical in addressing human rights issues and also maintaining international law. This shows the success of R2P and humanitarian efforts and their effectiveness in terms of safeguarding civilian lives.

The Syrian resources have been put at the centre of the failure of R2P. This is because with the commencement of the dissent against Assad's regime in 2011, the resource question was at the heart of the domestic, regional and international response to the ensuing humanitarian crisis. As such, when the protests escalated into a full blown conflict, the Syrian government's response was backed by Russia and Iran who were supporting Damascus for strategic reasons and anti-Assad rebel groups which were backed by the US, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others. This was complicated by the desire to dislodge the Islamic State from resource rich areas in Iraq and parts

of Syria (Levant) and campaigns to contain Syrian Kurds by Turkish forces (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019).

This explains the reasons why efforts to reach a diplomatic humanitarian intervention have been unsuccessful. With Russian and Iranian support which as we have seen is driven by strategic reasons to control resources as well as use Syria as a strategic footprint to serve as a Launchpad for influence missions. To this end therefore, rather than herald an intervention aimed at alleviating the ensuing humanitarian crisis, the Syrian government has steadily regained control of territory from opposition forces, including the opposition's stronghold in Aleppo in 2016. Furthermore, even in the face of sanctions and rhetoric from the international community, the Syrian regime under Bashar al Assad has been accused of using chemical weapons numerous times over the course of the conflict, resulting in international condemnation in 2013, 2017, and 2018 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). It is also worth noting that while the West's external military intervention came in the form of provision of arms and military equipment rather than lead to a humanitarian corridor for alleviating the crisis in Syria, the end product was the perpetuation and complication of the Syrian conflict. Ongoing violence and proxy wars have facilitated the reappearance of terrorist groups in Syria and the Middle East region in general.

The Syrian conflict has lasted longer than World War II (WW II). It has further displaced the neighbourhood of a half of the population and decimating close to a million people. As such, interventions from external powers such as Iran, Turkey, Russia, United States and the Gulf States and their approaches to the conflict are extreme. Their methods include widespread use of sieges, indiscriminate aerial attacks, and arming proxies. There has been the use of internationally banned chemical weapons on civilian populations and also mass detentions and torture of opponents. This has further complicated the Syrian conflict making the achievement of a resolution more distant and remote (Peace Insight, 2016).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that resources (natural and strategic) in Syria have been at the heart of factors surrounding the applicability of the doctrine in Syria. The conflict in Syria has morphed into a battle for control of Syria's oil deposits, natural gas and phosphate reserves. The natural resource configurations complicate humanitarian efforts under the doctrine of R2P in

Syria. At the regional level, the Kurdish factor has sucked in Ankara complicating quests for use of neighbourhood countries as humanitarian gateways. Furthermore, Russia and Iran, the two main military allies and enablers of Bashar Assad's regime, are engaged in competition over access to the Syrian economy and thus are disablers of humanitarian efforts. This is because Russia's global position as a political mammoth coupled with Russia's role in Syria has complicated humanitarian efforts in Syria. This is due to the fact that while Russia is interested in rebuilding the state, it is also embroiled in a competition with Iran as Tehran seeks to penetrate and cement itself deeply within the Syrian state.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS FACTORS, HEGEMONIC POWER POLITICS AND R2P IN SYRIA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into Syria's ethno-religious composition and how this has affected humanitarian interventions. It therefore, analyzes the nature of the country's ethnic and religious composition and consequently, its influence on the applicability of R2P in the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Further to this, the chapter explores the influence of hegemonic power politics on the application of R2P. This covers how hegemonic countries have managed, through their hard and soft power capabilities, to influence the politics surrounding the applicability of R2P in Syria.

4.2 Ethno-Religious factors and R2P in Syria

This section delves into Syria's ethnic and religious composition and how this influences the use of R2P in the country. It analyzes the nature of the country's ethnic and religious groups and consequently shows how this has influenced the applicability of R2P in the country.

4.2.1 Syria's Ethno-Religious Composition

The Syrian conflict, labeled as one of the largest humanitarian crisis since WW II, has brought forth the role of ethnic and religious factors in conflicts and subsequent interventions. However, contested this issue remains, war and the changed structures in Syria have changed ethnic relations with more stereotypes and division among the groups (Salm, 2016).

Phillips (2015) notes that Syrian minority groups made up of the Kurds, Christians, Alawite and the Druze differ significantly from the majority Sunni Arab ethnic group (60% of population) who control resources and opportunities for the minority groups. Before 1970 there was Sunni Arab domination and little power and resources were in the hands of the Alawite but this changed after Assad took over power as their role, conditions and opportunities expanded their power compared to the Sunni Arabs. However, the Sunni Arabs still had considerable economic, political and social power prior to the 2011 conflict. The father-son Assad regimes that have

ruled via the Ba'ath party has spread fear of sectarianism as minority-majority group relations have become extensive (Phillips, 2015).

The 2011 revolution changed the preexisting social equilibrium creating opportunities and threats for ethnic groups in Syria. To the Sunni armed groups routing for the ouster of the Ba'athist regime led by Sunni extremist groups like ISIS, Ahrar al Sham and Jabhat al Nusra this offered an opportunity for a society modeled on Salafi Sunni Sharia law. This would limit the practice of moderate Sunnis such as the Kurds and other groups including Christians, Druze and Alawi beliefs and culture. Attaining of peace would potentially empower minority groups and establish a moderate secular government favoring practice of Kurd, Christian, Druze and Alawi language, beliefs and traditions without interference from conservative Sunni laws. The Assad regime argues it can guard these groups from the Sunni Arab radicalism therefore, raising the level of ethnic and religious identity (Salm, 2016).

Within the context of the conflict, Syria is composed of several diverse religious and ethnic religious groups that have coexisted and tolerated each other for generations. There has been salient system of stratification and little or no social mobility. The Alawites and Druze occupy the bottom with Kurds slightly above them. Christians occupy the middle while Sunni Arabs top the order. This social structure order has been highly affected by the conflict further complicating any interference mechanisms as geographically there lacks a mixing among the various religious and ethnic groups. Compared to the total population, Sunni Arabs lead at 59.1%, Alawites at 11.8%, Levantine Christians at 9.3%, Kurds at 8.9%. There are smaller numbers of Druze, Nusairis, Ismailis, Imamis, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans and other groups. By religion minorities stand at 14% of the Syrian population that includes Alawis, Druze, Greek Orthodox Christians and Ismailis (Van Dam, 2011).

Scholars including Philip (2015) contest that many of the objectives since the 2011 popular uprising were shared transversely religious and ethnic groupings in Syria. However, it is noted that ethno-religious identity in Syria depends on whether one is supportive or opposed to the Assad regime. For instance, all Sunnis oppose the Assad regime while all Alawis support the regime based on the support-oppose continuum. The other groups including Kurds, Druze and Christians are labelled as either supporters or opponents of the regime and this affects the social relations in society and consequently any peace processes in Syria. Khashanah (2014) shows that

the society is divided into three strata namely the pro-regime group, middle group and pro-revolt groups. The Sunni Arabs and Alawi have been engaged in most of the fighting while the other groups are in the grey zone.

Robinson et al. (2018) indicates that the Syrian civil war will protract and has bleak prospects for any political solutions. The protracted nature of the conflict based on sectarianism and other factors has an important influence on US policies in Syria. The regime of Bashar Al Assad has been saved by interventions from the Iranians and Russians helping it remain in control of strategic territories such as Damascus, Idlib, Allepo and the Mediterranean coast. Further complicating the case is the participation of competing powers together with Russia and the US. Sectarianism has taken root as Assad's response, intervention by external regional powers with varied political agendas, and extremist combatant groups. The Sunni and Alawi enmity has been made worse and sectarian identity continues to be exploited by parties in the conflict for support and instilling fear. However, the conflict is not exactly divided according to sectarian lines as the government has exploited sectarian tensions to survive.

Robinson et al. (2018) further argue that the regime has magnified sectarian fears among Alawis and Shia and also among the Druze and Christians. Shia militias have been enlisted using anti-Sunni rhetoric calling for the defence of Shia holy sites. External sectarian groups such as Hezbollah and the Iraq Shia militia were drawn in and also local sects such as the Druze, Christians and Alawis. The Shia-Sunni enmity further expanded the sectarian vector in the Syrian conflict as Shia groups attacked Sunni villagers in areas where these groups have historically coexisted.

External actors in the Syrian conflict have exacerbated sectarianism. The power struggle in the region with the main protagonists, Saudi Arabia and Iran, has found a rife place to square in the Syrian conflict. Sectarian blocs in Syria are supported by these regional powers therefore, increasing the sectarian nature of the conflict. The geostrategic competition manifesting in Syria emanates from Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran which seek regional influence, leadership in the Muslim world and also spread of their different political systems. Resources and support have been sent to Syria in support for the differing forces involved in the Syrian conflict. This together

with non-material support from religious figures continues to reinforce sectarianism (Harding, Elder and Beaumont, 2012).

4.2.2 Ethno-Religious Factors and the Application of R2P in Syria

After the Cold War, Russia has had an on-and-off relationship with Middle East states. Russia has in the recent past accused Gulf states of funding separatist movements in the North Caucasus and also Muslim extremists in the country. The Chechen war is another case that further deepened tensions as Middle East countries condemned Russia for annihilating Muslims in the name of war on terror. Relations however, improved after the West invaded Iraq as Russia condemned the move and sided with Islamic countries therefore, improving relations with the Muslim states. In the Syrian conflict Russia has sided with the Assad regime and it has been observed that Russian Muslims have participated in the Syrian conflict through joining the rebels. Russian militant rebels from the Caucasus have also joined the Islamic State and this has spread fear to the Russian state fearing an end of the Syrian conflict would lead to terrorism at home by the returning fighters. Russia has defended the Assad regime and protected the Shia Muslim population under Assad. Its involvement in the conflict has been in the name of preventing Islamic chaos (Zulfqar, 2018).

It is however, imperative to note that the external powers mainly regional and extra-regional involved in the chaos have ethnic and religious inclinations. They support either the Assad regime or the opposing rebels. The three main groups are firstly, Iran and Russia which support Assad regime. Second is Turkey, Saudi Arabia, GCC states, U.S, and NATO while the third bunch comprise of Jordan, Lebanon and Israel. These groups seek to somehow intervene and control outcomes of the conflict to fit their interests but this has been made harder by the ethnic and religious composition in Syria. Saudi Arabia a Sunni majority state seeks to have favorable outcomes in the end through reducing Iran's influence in Syria. Iran at the moment has more influence based on the support afforded to its ally, the Shia regime in Syria. Generally, Syria is Iran's only ally in the region that reduces its regional isolation. The Shia Syrian regime has therefore, been a partner to the majority Shia Iran. Iran has benefited from the shifting geopolitical developments in the region especially after the Arab Spring therefore gaining

immense influence. This situation has played negatively in using R2P in the conflict as its end game may be unfavorable for other global and regional powers (Kausch, 2015).

It is certain that the Middle East experiences religious and cultural hostilities among the different groups inhabiting the region. This has been projected by external actors who have played a key role in worsening the state. The Sunni and Shia Islamic divides prominent in the Syrian conflict, has attracted fighters from far and wide in the Islamic world. Non-state actors especially terror groups have also adopted the religious factor set by Iran. Iran has been strategically successful at forming regional alliances based on religious background and affiliation therefore, making ethnic background secondary but still critical in alliance formation in the region (Dizboni and Omar, 2018).

As the cradle of the most significant religious orders of the 21st century i.e., the Abrahamic religious orders, the Middle East is a religious melting point with all strands of Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam jostling for space in the region with disastrous consequences. In the period after the region got rid of the yoke of British colonialism, the region embarked on a quest to create an overarching ethno-religious identity at the national level in a Huntingtonian fashion. In Syria, this was a quest to crafting a national identity with the knowledge of the ethno-religious mosaic that is Syria with Sunnis, Armenians, Alawites, Kurds, Druze and Christian communities jostling to be part of the national polity in what Syria would later on use to project the image of the "beating heart of Arabism" in the Middle East. In the political arena, the Ba'ath party, which reigned in both Syria and Iraq would be born. The party was the conception of a Christian, Michel Aflaq. The political surface was built on the socio-economic backdrop of a poor, largely rural Islamic Arab population composed both of the Shia as well as the Sunni, and the Kurds as the predominant groups held together with the fabric of oppression (Black, 2015).

While religion plays a minor role in the Syrian conflict, it is significant in that it forms the foundation and fabric unto which the whole conflict is enmeshed. In 2012, the conflict in Syria which had started with the quest to oust the Ba'athist regime led by Bashar al Assad was increasingly and alarmingly mutating into an overtly sectarian conflict. According to Black (2015) sectarianism denotes the perpetuation of real religious differences using definitions of "otherness", "We/Us vs Them", and "Out group enmity" and "In group amity". However,

sectarianism must be understood within the rubric of power, resources and territory (Black, 2015).

So institutionalized is the Sunni – Shia divide to the extent that extremist Sunni preachers based in Sunni majority countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait often use their Friday afternoon clerical sermons in their characteristic intolerant language of Wahhabi exclusivity to abuse the Shias as "idol-worshippers". They also scorn Iranians referring to them as "Safawis", a pejorative reference to the 16th century Safavid dynasty. It is this schism that has led fanatical jihadis in either side of the divide to justify the killing of the opposing side of the religious divide terming them "apostates" and condemning them under the doctrine of "takfir" (Manfreda, 2018).

It is no wonder then that the civil war has served to amplify sectarian sentiments to the extent that the Alawites are now identified with Bashar al-Assad's regime while Syrian Sunnis are identified with the opposition. The latter has in effect attracted support from Saudi Arabia who seek to not only control Middle East politics but also contain the Alawites who do not bow down to the Saudi whims. On the other hand, the Iranians have entered the fray in support of Bashar al-Assad's regime. They have also co-opted Lebanon's Hezbollah, a militant Shia group which Tehran backs and which supports Assad to not only complicate humanitarian intervention efforts using the threat of terrorism but also to whip the Sunni communities into submission through the doctrine of fear. This reinforces the binary narrative of the Sunni Shia divide (Valley, 2014).

The Sunni terror group in Syria for instance, the Islamic State, has positioned anti-Shia feeling at the core of its lethal ideology. With most of the Arab world belonging to the Sunni branch of Islam, this is especially dangerous and resulted in the fermentation of the Islamic State's terroristic ideology catapulting the group into phenomenal significance not only in Syria but also in Iraq. This in effect complicated humanitarian efforts under the principle of R2P as the Islamic State attacked both the Shia communities as well as Christians from different denominations across Syria (Manfreda, 2018).

4.3 Influence of Hegemonic Power Politics and R2P in Syria

The application of R2P in the Syrian crises has been affected by hegemonic power politics among the main powers involved in the crisis. The main actors involved include regional and international organizations and also state actors. The main states involved include the U.S,

China, Iran, Turkey, Gulf Kingdoms and Russia while organizations such as the UN are heavily involved in resolving the crisis and also serving international and regional interests.

In the UN under the UNSC, Russia and China have combined and vetoed three resolutions for authorizing use of peaceful measures to curb the conflict in Syria. In 2012, these two states again vetoed a resolution threatening use of sanctions on the Syrian government unless it withdrew heavy weapons from the populated areas. This resolution was fronted by the British and sponsored by the U.S, Germany and France. In the case of Sudan in Darfur, application of R2P was influenced by hegemonic politics. High geopolitical stakes by hegemonic powers like Russia and China, which have economic interests in the oil and gas industry, led to the slowing of R2P and non-use of one of R2Ps pillars particularly military intervention. In the case of Libya, at the UNSC level states were involved in hegemonic politics and in the passing of Resolution 1973, where NATO was authorized to intervene, powerful states including Russia and China abstained (Gurbuz, 2016).

Jenkins (2014) observes that at the state level Iran has a keen interest in the conflict and the fall of the Assad regime is a strategic loss. Iran has few allies in the region. The Hezbollah and the Assad regime are part of this and Iran stands to lose a strategic regional ally. Further to this, Iran worries that the collapse of the Syrian government will inspire a movement championing for the dwindling of the Shia hegemony that the Islamic Republic of Iran roots for in the Middle East. This has led to the advent of a Shia force loyal to the Islamic Republic protecting Shia holy sites in Syria and not Assad per se. On the other hand, Russia has interests of maintaining a historical alliance with the regime which is its last ally in the Middle East. It also sees Syria as a strategic base and useful for great-power pretensions. Also engrained in Russia's interests is its affinity towards the Christian minority groups and hostility towards the Muslim extremists. Therefore, Russia has continually opposed any Western military intervention. Iran and Russia have openly supported Assad politically, financially and militarily. Russia's military instruments are consumed by the Assad regime and Syria hosts Russia's warm water naval base. Iran has provided financial, human and technical support. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps together with Shia volunteers have been deployed to Syria to offer needed support. The Hezbollah as a regional actor has found interests in this conflict and has joined the Assad regime through its hardened and experienced fighters. It seeks to protect its supply routes that pass

through Syria. It is notable that the protracted conflict increases the prospects of a regional war characterized by Shia-Sunni divide. Such a regional war may be a war of various kinds and may take the form of military incursions, terrorist attacks and guerilla warfare instead of open warfare among the regional and major power.

The U.S on the other hand has provided support to the rebels with humanitarian and also nonlethal assistance. The escalation of violence led to U.S secretly supplying weapons to these forces. The use of chemical weapons by the Assad government was a game changer, prompting U.S military support to the Syrian opposition forces. Further attacks on civilian populations by Assad using sarin gas led to U.S waiving its federal law to allow arming of rebels namely the Syria opposition forces. However, this was cautiously allowed by the United States and its NATO allies due to the fear of sophisticated weapons landing on extremist hands (Olga, 2013).

Regionally, the Syrian crisis has provided ground for regional hegemonies, Iran and Saudi Arabia to show might and display their ambitions in the Middle East. Proxy wars by these two historic rivals have been waged in Syria thus affecting the possibilities of a coordinated application of R2P by the regional and global powers. This rivalry and contest for regional leadership is religious and also geopolitical in that in the case of Iran, the predominantly Shia regional power has hinged her hegemonic quest on the religious leadership for all Shia Muslims in the Middle East. Even though Shia Muslim numbers globally stand at 10% of all Muslim, the Middle East has created an advantage for Iran to lead these believers. Iraq has about 60-65% of its total population being Shia and in Bahrain, the Shia population stands at 70% of the total population. In Yemen it stands at 35%, Lebanon is 35%, 30% in Kuwait, 16% in UAE, 20% in Qatar, and 15% in Saudi Arabia while in Syria it stands at 10-12% of the total population (Eksi, 2017).

These Shia Muslims are within the sphere of influence of Iran and have been referred to as the Shia Crescent. The influence can be noted from the Arab Spring where Iran saw this as an Islamic awakening geared towards deposing Sunni governments and monarchs such as the one in Saudi Arabia and. This scenario has played out through proxy wars in Gulf States including Yemen and Syria. The Arab Spring has therefore, provided ground for the quest for regional leadership in the region which has been met through alliances among either Sunni or Shia

governments. Saudi Arabia forged closer ties with Gulf States to counter the Iranian threat and boost its regional leadership ambition and vice versa (Guido, 2014).

The Middle East has been a multipolar region with no particular overarching hegemon. Saudi Arabia which has immense military capability, financial capacity and backing from Gulf States and global power, the U.S, has not been able to claim the top spot. Iran has managed to outclass the Saudi monarch and maintain relevance in the Middle East which has at times come with the help of another global power, Russia. This scenario indicates a balance of power characterized by many confrontations which have not led to the emergence of a single regional hegemony (Eksi, 2017).

The use of R2P in the crisis has been complicated by power politics among the various state and non-state actors such as terrorist groups which have gained an important position. Turkey has had a rather significant influence through its interests on the Kurd issue though it has operated carefully to avoid confronting U.S and Russian interests in Syria. The Kurds however, have in recent times become critical in the regional and global hegemonic politics through their efforts in fighting ISIS. Evolution of the Syrian crisis shows the extensive shortage of mutual trust in the international system and among regional and global hegemons (Iran, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and U.S). Coordinated action by these states especially on matters regarding R2P has been complicated by their varied national interests (geopolitical and economic) but it is still achievable. Further, there has been a possibility of effective alliances that have characterized the relations among these actors for instance the working relations between Turkey and Russia (Mikheev, 2018).

In recent times, the US has pulled out of Syria leaving space for the other actors to reestablish positions, form new alliances and expand control. The Assad regime has reestablished control in new areas in Syria after Kurds requested for reinforcements. This also signifies a new alliance with the Kurdish fighters who were former adversaries of the regime. This has led to international condemnation of the U.S after abandoning their former allies, the Kurds, in the war against ISIS in Syria. Pullout of the U.S forces by Washington has also thrown Turkey, a regional power, into the fore front as the country seeks to control Syrian territory bordering Turkey and inhabited by Kurds. This move is taken under the pretense of resettling Syrian refugees back in the country but it is a military incursion to curve away Syrian territory and

weaken the Kurdish forces as well as the Turkish Kurdish group PKK. This situation leaves Gulf States and Israel in a limbo as they depended on the U.S to contain and check on Iran in Syria (Cook, 2019).

Another global power that has benefited from U.S withdrawal is Russia which is now under control and the dominant player. Its interests in Syria including the protection of Assad regime has been eased leaving the Kremlin more influential in the region. Further, Russia has restrained action by Turkey and dominated activities concerning any action against Syria. The current outcomes have boosted Moscow's prestige that it can protect its friends compared to other global powers such as the U.S. This situation, which continues to unfold differently by the day, spells a new phase in the Syrian conflict. Fluid alliances characterize the conflict as shown by the recent partnering of the Assad government with Kurdish fighters (Litsas, 2019).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the influence of ethno-religious factors and hegemonic power politics on the application of R2P in Syria. The chapter delved into Syria's ethno-religious composition and how this has affected humanitarian interventions by analyzing the nature of the country's ethnic and religious composition and consequently, its influence on the applicability of R2P in the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the influence of hegemonic power politics on the application of R2P. The chapter found out that Syria's conflict has exploited the ethno-religious fissures within the Syrian national mosaic comprising of the Sunnis, Armenians, Alawites, Kurds, Druze and Christian communities. While religion plays a minor role in the Syrian conflict, it is significant in that it forms the foundation and fabric unto which the whole conflict is enmeshed. It is no wonder then that while the conflict started off as a quest to oust the Baathist regime led by Bashar al Assad, it mutated into an overly sectarian conflict.

The application of R2P in Syria is complicated by external powers and the respective support these powers offer to the internal groups (ethno-religious groups) in Syria. A military intervention has been complicated by external dynamics and also the internal disunity among the various groups in Syria. The complications have been brought by an overlap of interests by the involved key actors (Russia, U.S, Gulf Kingdoms, Iran and Europe). Current strategies have failed as hegemonic powers namely the U.S and Western allies e.g. the United Kingdom and France have failed to potentially level the playing field for the opposition forces through

destroying the government's superior airpower and artillery units. This may provide a chance for change from within. Prior and current strategies that provide support for opposition forces have yielded little gains for the West and Syrian civilians in general. This calls for a change in tact as external comprehension of Syrian internal dynamics remains very limited. Therefore, the internal dynamics in Syria including ethnic and religious diversity remain a key hindrance to R2P application and this is further convoluted by the fluid alliances and allegiances by the various groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is a summary the findings and conclusions of the study on the application of the principle of R2P in Syria and why it has largely failed. The chapter also proposes measures that should be enacted for the intents of the doctrine of R2P not only in Syria but also in other conflict hotspots across the world. The chapter is divided into three sections, namely; the introduction which points out the purpose of the chapter; a summary of the findings and conclusions which summarize what the study found on the application of the doctrine of R2P in Syria and finally the recommendations.

5.1.1 R2P and risk management in Syria

The study aptly shows that the application of the doctrine of R2P in Syria has been through UN's resolution numbers 2139, 2165 and 2191 as well as multilateral interventions by Western states such as the United States, Britain, and France. However, these efforts have not been enough due to the fact that the R2P is merely an international principle devoid of an independent enforcement agency. As such, the failure of the principle of R2P to stop atrocities and protect civilian populations in Syria is not a failure of the doctrine per se but that of the imperfect actors and institutions responsible with its implementation. Furthermore, the partisan usage of R2P to advance selfish interests in Libya where it was used to mask political interventions and particularly NATO's unauthorized change of regime in Libya have proved a barrier to effective usage of R2P. As such, R2P in its current form is no-longer adequate in humanitarian interventions.

5.1.2 Natural Resources and R2P in Syria

With regard to the influence of natural resources on the application of R2P in Syria, resources (natural and strategic), have been at the heart of factors surrounding the application of the doctrine in Syria. The conflict in Syria has morphed into a battle for control of Syria's oil deposits, natural gas and phosphate reserves. At the regional level, the Kurdish factor has sucked in Ankara complicating quests for use of neighborhood countries as humanitarian gateways. Furthermore, Russia and Iran are competing for more influence in Syria thus are disabling

humanitarian efforts. This is because Russia's global position as a political mammoth coupled with its role in Syria has not only complicated humanitarian efforts but also Russia is embroiled in a competition with Tehran as Iran seeks to infiltrate and embed itself within the Syrian state.

5.1.3 Ethno-religious, hegemonic power politics and R2P in Syria

The study found out that ethno-religious factors and hegemonic power politics have influenced the application of R2P largely due to the respective support these powers offer to the internal groups in Syria. As such, the humanitarian intervention has been complicated by external dynamics and also the internal disunity among the various groups in Syria. Further complications have been brought by the overlap of interests by the involved key actors (Russia, U.S, Gulf Kingdoms, Iran and Europe). This conflict can be brought to an end if the main powers put the Syrian populace forth. Current strategies have failed as hegemonic powers namely the U.S and Western allies for instance the United Kingdom and France have failed to potentially level the playing field for the opposition forces through destroying the government's superior airpower and artillery units. This may provide a chance for change from within. Prior and current strategies that provide support for opposition forces have yielded little gains for the West and Syrian civilians in general. This calls for a change in tact as external comprehension of Syrian internal dynamics remains very limited.

5.2 Recommendations of the Study

As the Syrian case attests, the world has an appalling record in actualizing the doctrine of R2P. It is no wonder then that hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, the DRC, Syria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Somalia, and other conflict hotspots across the Globe are still threatened by mass atrocities. Critics of the doctrine thus buttress the point that there is little promise for the doctrine of R2P due to the stalemate occasioned by interventionists and stalwarts of sovereignty.

In lieu of the foregoing, this study has several recommendations geared towards actualizing the doctrine of R2P. First, it is worth noting that there are animosities occasioned by the widespread view that the problem of the failure of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect is occasioned by a conflict between the West which promotes intervention and non-western countries which defend sovereignty. This depiction dampens the morale of UN peacekeepers particularly from emerging global powerhouses such as China which while often hesitant about political and military intervention, is pivotal in the peace negotiations in South Sudan. As such, at all levels of

global governance, constructive debate about how the world and more so institutions of the United Nations as well as institutions created by regional integration schemes pertaining on the development and strengthening of systems that are meant to manage the exercise of military force particularly in humanitarian interventions is needed. This is important if we are to thwart the apathy that has clouded the doctrine of R2P in lieu of the intervention in Libya where the world naively gave third parties a carte blanche to regime change masked under humanitarian military intervention.

In addition, there is a need for discussions at the supranational level geared to addressing the issue of how to effectively protect at risk civilian populations. At the heart of these discussions should be the desire to have the tools of choice i.e., sanctions, global (UN) or regional peacekeeping missions, and/or military operations, should involve a holistic assessment of the risks involved and identifying the lesser of several evils in a particular situation. It should also involve a more critical assessment of the tools of choice for interventions and their potential blind spots.

Furthermore, the West needs to stop sowing seeds of discord in the global pursuit for the success of humanitarian interventions by putting a stop to its sermons to the rest of the world and instead pursue constructive and open-minded debates on actualizing the doctrine of R2P. In so doing, we will be heralding the creation of a system of sound early-warning structures, conflict assessments and humanitarian intervention tools that help not only in recognizing the threat of atrocities but also preventing them before they occur and in case they do occur, minimizing their casualties.

The world also needs to take advantage of 21st century developments. It is worth noting that technology, demography and globalization have revolutionized socio-economic and political relations to the extent that the traditional Westphalian nation state is threatened. As the world enters the post-Westphalian nation state coupled by a changing world order, there is a need to harness the potential of regional and international institutions such as the UN, NATO, EU, NAFTA and other arrangements mooted by regional integration schemes in order to challenge the notion of sovereignty as a potential hindrance to the application of the doctrine of R2P. This is especially relevant in the present age where states are ceding authority and power to non-state actors.

To actualize this, there is a need for the world to promote today's meta-institutions in order to ensure that such institutions are capable of dealing with regimes that do not protect their civilian population. Such promotion should include the creation of new coordination mechanisms in order to enhance and ensure prompt responses to potential sources of threats to civilians particularly in conflict hotspots. To help 21st century meta-institutions face challenges to the actualization of the doctrine of R2P, the world should hasten the creation of new international accords and institutions as well as promote more vigorous collaborations that go beyond United Nation talks in order to help censure, punish and prevent bad behavior. Furthermore, there should be creation of global institutions that enhance more strong and active role in both policing and diplomacy.

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Appendix I: Map of Syria