

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the foundation for the research by providing context of the perennial dilemma of the United States in implementing responsibility to Protect in the Syrian conflict under Donald Trump's Administration. Furthermore, It will outline the research question and objectives, discussing relevant theory, reviewing previous literature on the topic, stating the hypotheses and describing the research methodology and writing system that will be used in the study.

1.1 Background

President Donald Trump came to office in January 2016, presenting a huge opportunity to reflect on the failures of the Obama administration and learn from them, in addressing the existing conflict in Syria. Following the outbreak of conflict in Syria in 2011, which shows the rise of terrorist groups and the alleged use of chemical weapons, the Syrian conflict has been a pivotal part of the United States' foreign policy in the Middle East. There are many conflicts around the world but one may ask why should the US be concerned with the Syrian conflict, like Senator Marcos Rubio during the congressional meeting on the US foreign policy in 2013, According to Senator Lieberman the significance of the US leading a humanitarian intervention in ending the Syrian conflict which has seen a massive human rights violations is to reinstate the trust and confidence of allies of the United States in the Arab World and extent the World (The Situation in Syria 2012). Secondly, Ambassador Jones also emphasizes the need for US engagement in the Syrian conflict to bring a resolution to the conflict will secure the safety of its allies in the region. The US involvement in conflict will provide an opportunity to eradicate terrorist movements in the region. Furthermore, he explained

that the alleged use of chemical weapons in the conflict has sounded an alarm to prevent these chemical weapons to fall into the wrong hands and could be used against the US and its allies.

The Syrian civil war began in March 2011 with anti-government demonstrations against President Bashar al-Assad but quickly escalated into an armed uprising and later conflict (Sterling, 2012). The US backed the insurgents, while Russia and Iran backed the Assad regime. With hundreds of thousands of people killed and millions of refugees and displaced people, the conflict is now in its eleventh year and shows no signs of ending anytime soon. The conflict is currently at a standstill, with all parties looking for a way to end it. Although the United States' options as a major international actor in the conflict are limited, there are still avenues it can pursue to end the conflict. The Syrian conflict has resulted in one of the worst humanitarian crises in history; according to the UN, over 400,000 people have died since 2011, more than 1.7 million have become refugees, and approximately 4.5 million have already been internationally displaced, with the majority of these people being women and children. More than 11.7 million people require immediate humanitarian assistance and protection (OCHA, 2019).

The Responsibility to Protect commonly known as R2P is a principle that many have advocated as a way to end the conflict. Otherwise, a norm endorsed under the international human rights by United Nations member states at the World Summit in 2005 (Global Centre for the R2P). According to the 2005 World Summit Outcome, states are responsible for protecting their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the international community should assist states in carrying out their responsibilities and strengthening their defense capabilities (United Nations Report, 2009).

Finally, when a state fails to protect its people from these crimes, the international community should be prepared to take collective action in a manner that is timely and decisive through the Security Council and in compliance with the United Nations Charter. R2P served as the expansion and evolution of the theory of humanitarian intervention, many people believe it could be the key to preventing atrocities and crimes against civilians in conflicts around the world.

The international community has repeatedly made a mess of dealing with the numerous demands for humanitarian intervention, which is coercive action against a state to protect people within its borders from grave harm. At the start of the 1990s, there were no agreed-upon rules for dealing with cases like Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo, and there are still none today. There is still disagreement about whether there is a right to intervene, how and when it should be exercised, and under whose authority. After, September 11, 2001, policy attention has been focused on a different set of issues. the response to global terrorism and the case for pre-emption against countries suspected of acquiring weapons of mass destruction irresponsibly. Nevertheless, these issues are conceptually and practically distinct. There are indeed common questions, particularly regarding the precautionary principles that should apply to any military action anywhere. Also, what is at stake in the debates over intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere in the scope and limits of countries' rights to act in self-defense, not their right or obligation to intervene elsewhere to protect people other than their own (Erans & Sahnoun, 2002).

This thesis investigates the failure of the United States to implement Responsibility to Protect in the Syrian conflict under Donald Trump's administration in a view of means of conflict resolution. It considers past

cases of humanitarian interventions and lessons learned from those examples when making policy recommendations, as well as the legality of the options under current international law.

1.2 Research Question

Why did the United States failed to implement Responsibility to Protect in the Syrian Conflict under Donald Trump's administration?

1.3 Literature Review

The author gathered and examined numerous sources, including books, articles, reports, and UN documents, all of which discussed R2P from a different perspective, and this section will attempt to briefly review each of them. In all of the collected literature, scholars and politicians faced two major contentious issues in their writing. On one hand, the development of the R2P as tool under the international legal framework that served as option to prevent perpetration of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity in conflict around the world. On the other hand, the complexities that are involved in the implementation of the R2P especially when the international community have disputed ideas whether or not the R2P should be implemented in the case of the Syrian conflict.

Theresa (2011) argued extensively that the R2P places pressure on the US to take action in situations where it may not have a direct national interest or where intervention may be politically or strategically complicated. Theresa's argument is that the US has a tendency to view R2P as an option rather than a duty, and as a result, their actions in implementing R2P have been inconsistent. She suggests that the US often only intervenes in situations where there is a direct national interest, and may even act as a bystander in situations where R2P should

be implemented. This is in contrast to the idea of R2P as a norm, where the duty to protect vulnerable people is consistently implemented regardless of national interest. Overall, Theresa's argument is that the US has not fully embraced the responsibility to protect as a norm and has instead approached it as an option to be employed selectively.

In his thesis, Ajshe (2017) argues that American foreign policy towards the Syrian Civil War shifted during the years 2011 to 2015, becoming increasingly schizophrenic in nature. He contends that the war in Syria became an "escalating stalemate" due to the strategic competition between regional and extra-regional actors, such as Russia, Iran, and the United States. He argues that American policy objectives towards Syria, such as the removal of President Bashar al-Assad, failed to materialize due to the failure of the Obama administration, Congress, and the United Nations Security Council to develop a military solution that would facilitate political objectives. Ajshe contends that this lack of a clear strategy or direction led to a fragmented and inconsistent approach to the Syrian conflict, resulting in a failure to achieve any meaningful progress towards a resolution. Overall, Ajshe's thesis argues that American foreign policy towards the Syrian Civil War was characterized by a lack of coherence and a failure to achieve its stated objectives.

Orford's book entitled "International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect" provides a fresh perspective. In this context, the concept of responsibility to protect is framed not in terms of humanitarian goals, but as a bold step toward consolidating and strengthening previous practices in the international effort in executing authority. The study provides an original and detailed analysis of several historical, philosophical, and political backgrounds of the concept of

responsibility to protect to demonstrate the R2P concept in much deeper roots than it may first appear. The book allows for a look at aspects of the concept that have largely gone unnoticed in the literature. Orford (2011) weaves these threads together to demonstrate that the concept of responsibility to protect did not emerge in a vacuum; it has a long history and greater relevance in the international sphere than we may initially recognize.

Hui-Chol Pak, Hye-Ryon Son, and Son-Kyong Jong (2020) explained their thoughts on the contending debates about the leg of the concept of the responsibility to protect in the context of how states conduct humanitarian intervention around the world. Furthermore, they stated discussions concerning the concept of R2P have not been conclusive in the scholarly literature of its legality and applicability. The research raises concerns that the principle of R2P can be employed by the west on developing countries such as countries in Africa and Asia as the major driver of the principle are that of the west.

Grover (2018) addresses the opinions of numerous international law and human rights experts in his book “The Responsibility to Protect” regarding the disputed definition and application. Value and practicality of the Responsibility to Protect principle. According to him, the difficult question of whether intervention by States implementing R2P with or without the support of the UN Security Council constitutes a state act of aggression or instead is legitimate and does not violate the offending State's sovereign jurisdiction. Failure to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes has had a negative influence on world peace and security, making it imperative that the responsibility to protect concept and its applicability has to be revisited.

Carl K. Ruth (2021) found that there are inconsistencies in the implementation of the third principle of the R2P in the Case of the Syrian conflict by the United Nations Security Council which has the United States as a member, because of the failure to reach a consensus. These inconsistencies are going to result in inactive foreign policies and to some extent achieving future consensus on matters that involve the implementation of R2P. The study further shows If the UNSC does not take action, proposals for how to successfully implement R2P is part of the consequences for constructive social change. According to the common goals and tenets of the United Nations (UN) Charter, the proposed public policy change would give victims of mass atrocity crimes the chance to obtain protection and security.

Açıkyıldız (2018) articulated the legitimacy of the R2P and the problems of its applicability in the Syrian conflict by focusing on the case of the Syrian conflict as an example of a situation that required the implementation of R2P but the international community failed to do so, even though it has all indications that the state is unable to protect its people from the crimes that are being committed in the Syrian conflict. The author concluded that even though some scholars such as Thakur (2013) and Rieff (2011) argued that R2P is inactive and ineffective and to some extent many lost hopes in the norm of R2P in the international community as a response to conflict all over the world, it is still relevant and can be useful if the United Nations system can implement the norm of the R2P without the problem of veto powers supporting different parties of the conflict.

The development of R2P from an initially advocated principle to promoted international norm gave way to other debates about its implementation and to what basis, do states decide to implement based

on the principle of preventing mass atrocities and genocides in situations where a state failed to protect its citizens and their international commitment towards implementing R2P or if states implement the R2P based on their national interest. Some of these arguments were extensively explored by Alfajri's article entitled "The Failure of the International Community to implement Responsibility to Protect in Darfur". This study focused on the way and manner that R2P should be implemented putting into consideration the timing of the implementation as the most important part of the principle of R2P is the fast response in preventing mass atrocities and genocide before they occurred. The research examines the R2P application in the case of Darfur and to some extent the future implementation options to look at under the pretext of R2P (Alfajri, 2020).

To further explore the problems encounters in implementing the norm of R2P, Marwan examines in his thesis entitled "Responsibility to protect: The Use and The Abuse" about looking at how the international community responded to the War in Iraq in 2003, the Libyan conflict (2011) and the Syrian conflict (2011) in the perspective of the R2P. Marwan argued that national interest and other political factors to some extent greatly affect the response of the international community in implementing the principle of the R2P. The Author further explored the application of the R2P from a different standpoint putting the case of Iraq and Libyan crises into context (Hameed, 2014).

Bellamy made attempts to answer some of the most fundamental questions about the principle of Responsibility to Protect in his article entitled "The Responsibility to Protect Five Years On" such as the primary function of R2P, whether or not it is a norm, and if it is to what extent, furthermore, what were some of its contributions and

achievements on the prevention and mass atrocities and genocide and to what extent it has improved the protection of vulnerable populations in conflict situations. Debates and critics about the implementation of R2P have also been highlighted in this article. Bellamy argued that rather than viewing R2P as a "red flag" to trigger a global response, it is more appropriate to view it as a policy agenda that has to be implemented, or else the R2P principle will only serve as a diplomatic tool in trying to limit states from carrying out mass atrocities and genocide on the civilian population but it would not bring about any effective international action in responding to mass atrocities and genocides (Bellamy, 2010).

According to the above literature presented by this thesis, there is clearly a research gap because most previous study of R2P in the case of Syria tends to focus on the application of the concept of R2P in terms of its legitimacy and whether or not it is still relevant as an international norm which could be used to prevent future crisis that involve mass killing and atrocities of civilian. Although some authors have dwelled on the failure of the United Nations failure to implement R2P as an international response in the Syrian conflict to prevent grievous human rights crimes that occurs during the course of the conflict in Syria but none has studies 'The Failure of The United States to Implement Responsibility to Protect in the Syrian conflict under Donald Trump's Administration'.

1.4 Research Methodology

In this research, the author will use a qualitative research methodology and will be conducted through thematic analysis, a common research method in the study of international relations (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2018). Thematic analysis is conducted by collecting data by reviewing the existing literature then the researcher

will summarize, classify and reduce the data into the most relevant materials in answering the research question, in answering the research question the researcher will present its findings in thematic format by using both main and sub-topics, finally the researcher will layout conclusions to verify the finding according to the data collected (Crowe et al., 2011).

1.4.1 Data Sources

This research will mainly consist data from secondary sources. This will mainly be in the form of books, journal articles, policy papers, statements and reports from several governmental institutions and international organizations. The data that would be much utilized will be from newspapers, books and articles written by scholars and experts, especially the ones that involved information and analysis on the implementation of the concept of R2P and most importantly the failure of the US in implement R2P in Syria. To prevent being bias in the analysis of R2P in the case of Syria with a wide range of sources from various backgrounds will be used.

1.5.1 Data Collection Technique

As part of this study, the researchers used library research methodologies to gather data through a variety of data gathering activities and literature reviews on R2P, the Syrian conflict, and the US response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Books, journals, official papers, essays, newspaper stories, and supplementary websites connected to the topic under study make up the literature that has been gathered. The information is then used to research the topics covered in the study.

1.5.2 Data Analysis Data

As qualitative research gives room for the use of thematic approach, this thesis will analyze the factors that led to the failure of the United

States' efforts to implement R2P under the Trump's administration in the Syrian conflict. The thesis will present its finding with the use theoretical perspective of the concept of Responsibility to Protect to make sense of the United States Failure to implement R2P in the case of Syria. Furthermore, the findings will be explored under subtopics. Due to the complexity of the issue surrounding the case of the Syrian conflict will just limit it analyses on the dynamic of the US failure to implement R2P and its actions that fails to effectively implement any forms of humanitarian response based of the principle of the R2P.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

1.5.1 Foreign policy

Foreign policy research frequently takes front stage in the field of international relations. The analysis of foreign policy frequently focuses on explanations of the goals, objectives, and behaviors of a state. By highlighting the vital role that decision and choice play in international politics, foreign policy is significant as the tool by which nations and governments regularly manage their ties with other states and international institutions (Holsti, 1977). The pursuit of a state's national interests is accomplished through a combination of strategies and actions known as foreign policy. The aims and objectives of a state's future are the main factors that drive its foreign policy. In addition, a state's foreign policy is chosen, created, and managed by policymakers to uphold or alter a specific state interest in the international sphere.

The management of states' external relations and activities, as evident from their national policies, is a key component of the study of foreign policy. The plans, objectives, agreements, principles, understandings, measures, methods, and directives by which nations and governments conduct international relations with other states, non-

governmental actors, and international organizations are referred to as a state's foreign policy (Jackson, Robert H & Sørensen, Georg, 2012). Because states and governments are part of an international system, they are compelled to engage with the foreign policies of other states that are already in place in order to have an impact on their own national interests. This is because they have no control over other states due to their sovereignty. In this line, states frequently interact with other states in an effort to shape their behavior and objectives.

Additionally, foreign policies are a plan and strategy used by policymakers in their interactions with other states and international players; these strategies are regulated to further a certain national goal. According to Holsti, the state's activities and actions in the international community in an effort to gain from the global system fall under the purview of foreign policy. Additionally, the foreign policy emphasizes choosing particular actions from a variety of options that the state employs to accomplish its goal as well as utilizing state resources to accomplish the numerous objectives that the state sets out.

1.5.2 Humanitarian Intervention

The concept of humanitarian intervention has been a prominent discourse in the study of international relations since the aftermath of the Cold War. The concept aimed creating a forcible action pursued by states or group of states or international organizations towards other states through the use of force or threat of military arms to prevent or stop mass human rights violations with or without the approval the host state or the UN Security Council. Humanitarian Intervention has a keen controversial debate in many areas of studies apart from international relation such as political science, philosophy and international law. Many scholars including Hugo Grotius and Francisco de Vitoria

recognized the right to intervene to stop a state from mistreating its own citizens, making them the first proponents of humanitarian intervention (Andrew Heywood, 2011).

Humanitarian intervention, which to the majority appeared to be a military action meant to protect innocent people in other nations from egregious human rights violations, first entered the public consciousness in the course of the twentieth century around 1990 (Saban Kardas, 2003). Few other political topics have succeeded in capturing the attention of the general public in the post-Cold War era as it has in academic study, the concerns of decision-makers, and international organizations. The idea became problematic because it directly contradicts the very international norms that were the foundation in which the United Nations was built on. The United Nations was established to safeguard nonintervention and sovereignty among states. The UN Charter prohibited the use of military force in the pursuits of foreign policies of states.

1.5.3 The concept of Responsibility to protect

In order to stop genocide and protect victims from large-scale atrocities, the concept of responsibility to protect emerged as one of the remedies on a global scale. All UN Member States endorsed the Responsibility to Protect in 2005, and the UN Security Council has since renewed it twice. The Responsibility to Protect aims to address the four core problems of preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

Three pillars support the responsibility to protect principle. First, it is the primary duty of states to defend their own people from the four crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, as well as from the incitement to commit such crimes; second,

it is the duty of the international community to help a state carry out its RtoP. Third, it is the responsibility of the international community to act swiftly and forcefully in cases where the state has blatantly failed to protect its citizens from one or more of the four crimes, in accordance with the UN Charter (John Feffer & Ian Williams, 2009).

The R2P approach was a departure from the prior notion of humanitarian intervention, which placed a strong emphasis on the state as the primary actor in charge of ensuring the safety of its own citizens. The R2P theory spawned a new notion that the international community is responsible for aiding nations suffering from mass crimes and broadened the definition of armed intervention. After witnessing numerous mass murders and genocides, the international community developed the R2P idea.

1.6 Hypotheses

The study found that the United States failed to implement Responsibility to Protect in the case of the Syrian conflict under the Trump administration due to three major factors (a) the prioritization of domestic issues due to the American first doctrine by President Trump (b) US lacks strategic interest and it was unclear on what policies to pursue in the Syrian conflict during Trump administration (c) Lack of international support due its failures in previous interventions which involved R2P and challenge imposed by Russia and China in vetoing any intervention efforts concerning the Syrian conflict.

Furthermore, R2P could have been successfully implemented by the Trump administration in the Syrian conflict, the principle of R2P does not guarantee a way of ending the conflict due to the complex nature of the conflict, but it does provide the US with a legal and realistic

opportunity in pursuing negotiation for settlement under the pretext of R2P.

1.7 Systematic Writing

This thesis will consist of five chapters.

Chapter I

This chapter will outline the problem statement, research question, literature review, conceptual framework, and research methodology.

Chapter II

This chapter will explore the Syrian conflict from its inception in relation to R2P and why was it significant for the international community to respond especially the United States under the trump administration. First, it will focus on the background of the conflict in Syria, by looking mass atrocities and humanitarian crisis that the conflict has resulted, which includes the use of chemical weapons that termed to be one the greatest use of aggression against civilian population. The chapter will end up with exploring the need for responsibility to protect to be implemented in the case of Syria.

Chapter III

This chapter will discuss the concept of the Responsibility to Protect as an international norm that has been adopted by the international community to prevent mass atrocities and genocide and its significance in responding to situations where states failed to protect their population from mass killings and genocide. This chapter will further explore cases such as in Libya and Iraq where R2P has been implemented and the chapter will conclude with discussions on the inconstancies in the implementation of the R2P.

Chapter IV

The fourth chapter will examine the factors that led to why the United States failed to implement Responsibility to Protect in the Syrian conflict under President Trump's administration and why R2P could have been a curial tool in ending the Syrian conflict. The chapter will attempt to answer the research question "Why did the United States fail to implement "Responsibility to Protect" in the Syrian Conflict under Donald Trump's administration" by analyzing the evident that were gathered through the data collected. The analysis will be laid in thematic analysis through the perspective of the theoretical frameworks.

Chapter V

Finally, the last chapter will lay out conclusions and recommendations.