The UN Security Council's Role in the Syrian Crisis: Pain killer in Low Politics and Poor Record in High Politics (2011-2018)

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ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring's wave arrived in Syria on 26 January 2011 and the unrest flared up on 15 March 2011 in the city of Daraa, 58 kilometers south of Damascus. Since then, Syria has been immersed in a civil war. The Security Council adopted different measures to contain this crisis. The main objective of the present research is to analyze the performance of the United Nations Security Council in tackling the Syrian crisis. The findings of the present research imply that the Security Council, in its role as a conflict moderator, has shown a positive performance particularly in such areas as instituting ceasefire, deploying peacekeeping forces, promoting humanitarian activities, facilitating the political transition process, securing the territorial integrity of the country, assisting the refugees and controlling Syria's chemical weapons arsenal. Even so, this body, due to the veto power of the permanent members, the complex nature of the crisis, and the conflictual interests of Russia and the United States and regional actors, has not been spectacularly successful in the termination of the armed conflict and enforcing peace. In order to explicate the matter, a descriptive-analytical method based on qualitative content analysis has been utilized and the library, internet-based resources, and United Nations documents have been used.

Introduction

𝒯he preamble to the United Nations Charter and the Chapter I of this charter lay emphasis on the preservation of global peace and security, prevention of

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threats against peace, and suppression of any act of aggression or conditions that might lead to the violation of peace, through peaceful means and under the principles of justice and international law. The United Nation's mission in safeguarding universal peace ran into fundamental problems in the early decades of its foundation with the inception of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies. However, with the end of the Cold War, the Security Council was able to carry out important actions in safeguarding global peace across the world, some of which, especially the peacekeeping missions, were successful. Therefore, preserving peace and security was the foremost UN objective, and this responsibility, in line with Article 24 of Chapter V of the UN Charter, is delegated to the Security Council. Security Council is one of the essential pillars of the United Nations tasked with preserving international security and peace. According to Chapter VII of the Charter, the scope of the power of the Security Council includes the deployment of peacekeeping troops, imposition of international sanctions, and granting permission for the use of military force against aggressors. Moreover, in Chapter VI of the UN Charter, there are Articles 23-38 as well as Articles 11 and 99, which include provisions that the Council can recommend to parties concerning the settlement of disputes or conditions that threaten global peace. The decisions of the Council are promulgated in the form of resolutions, presidential statements, and press statements. Other than the Security Council, other pillars and entities related to the United Nations can also fulfill constructive roles in establishing peace through good offices, condemnation of violence, functional actions, or reducing the pains of the war victims.

Syria is one of the important and strategically imperative countries of the Middle East, which has always been given ample attention by major global powers owing to being situated on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and its proximity with Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, and Palestine. After the crisis cropped up in Egypt and Tunisia subsequent to the Arab Spring (2011), Syria also experienced unrest. With the continuation of the clashes and as chemical weapons were used against civilians in this country, different panaceas have been recommended by regional and international actors and

organizations to draw an end to the crisis, and a variety of strategies have been suggested by international actors. As an international body, the United Nations has also taken numerous actions to address and manage this crisis.

The Syrian crisis is one of the most protracted situations that have been taken into consideration by the UN Security Council. On average, this crisis, since its beginning, has been brought up by the Council every month, and in these sessions, documents have been issued by the Council in the form of resolutions or statements. Moreover, since the eruption of the Syrian crisis, Western countries, against the backdrop of their political goals which included the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad and making attempts to refer the Syrian officials to the International Criminal Court, came up with draft resolutions, which were vetoed by Russia and China. The pivotal question of the present essay is, "why has the UN Security Council been unable to fulfill its main responsibility in establishing peace and security in Syria?"

The essay hypothesizes that for reasons such as the complex nature of the crisis, the difficulty of providing a mutually-agreed solution and the conflicting interests of the permanent members of the Security Council and the regional beneficiary states, the effective role-playing of the Security Council in the Syrian Civil War has been curtailed. The present research comprises six sections: In sections, 1-3, the introduction, the methodology, the literature review, and the theoretical framework of the research are presented. In sections 4, it elaborates the orientation of the ratified resolutions concerning ceasefire, deployment of peacekeeping forces, humanitarian activities, chemical disarmament, and countering terrorism, as well as vetoed resolutions focused on derailing and condemning the government of Bashar al-Assad. It also discusses the Security Council statements urging the warring parties to exercise self-restraint and cooperate with the United Nations. The section 5 analyzes the reasons behind the incapability of the Security Council to play an effective role in managing the crisis. At the end and section 6, conclusions have been drawn.

2. Methodology and Literature Review

The methodology of this research is based on a qualitative content analysis of the main resolutions that have been issued in the Syrian crisis by the UN

Security Council. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification and identifying themes or patterns. In the end, the reasons behind the delineated pattern are presented. In this research, firstly the Security Council's low politics performance is identified and in the end, its failure in its major mission was explained.

There are a lot of research outputs on the role of the UN Security Council in the Syrian crisis. Sajjadpour (2018) argues that the Security Council drafted resolutions to end the Syrian crisis, but the draft resolutions were not adopted due to differences among the members of the Security Council and the consequent lack of consensus on some issues that paralyzed that organ. Guimarães and de Carvalho (2017), demonstrate that the impasses and conflicts of interest between the permanent members of the UN Security Council in the case of the Syrian civil war resulted in the failure of the organ to solve the humanitarian crisis in question. Shirazi (2015) also addressed this issue and argues that the history and performance of the Security Council demonstrate that national interests and strategic concerns of the great powers play a very important role in shaping the Security Council's decisions. Therefore the inaction of this organ return to strategic differences of its permanent members. Eminue and Dickson (2013) argue that Russian and Chinese actions had the effect of undermining the United Nations' multilateral approach to international peace and security. All of the above research papers addressed the issue from different political angles. All of them demonstrate as if the Security Council did nothing in the Syrian crisis. While it is argued in this paper that in the low-politics realm, the Security Council was able to perform a role, although it was far away from what was expected. The other shortcomings in the above papers are that they did not substantiate their arguments in the theoretical framework. This article doesn't look at the Security Council performance in black-white contrast. It invites the researchers to look into the gray aspect as well. This paper looks into the issue in a comprehensive with theoretical merits.

3. **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundations of the UN Security Council are predicated on the collective security theory. In a nutshell, collective security means the "guaranteeing of universal security by all." In other words, "unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno." It means, in case a violation occurs, all members are bound to come to the assistance of the victim of aggression. In other words, any international aggression or threat of aggression (on the global, continental, local, or even domestic levels) which might result in a threat against the global peace or the violation of peace or set the stage for a violation should be responded through the collective reaction of all members of the Security Council within the framework of the United Nations.

Despite its charming appearance, the notion of collective security entails the following assumptions:

a- Aggression is condemnable and the aggressor is easily identifiable.

b- All countries cooperate to repel the aggression and contribute their armed forces. In other words, governments don't get involved in the recruitment of allies and confrontation on either side of the crisis.

c- Major Powers, through their unity in action, confront any threat to peace. To put it more succinctly, no threat is made by the major powers, and even in cases their interests are at stake, they opt for unity in action.

d- There is no a simple formula to overcome a crisis or aggression. (Omidi, 2015: 354).

On the international level, these three assumptions do not materialize. International developments and events do not have a neutral state, because there are parties that benefit from these developments and there are others that suffer losses as a result of them. The eruption of wars sometimes comes at the benefit of a group of countries. For example, Iraq's war of aggression on Iran in 1980 was cheered by the West and Israel. In practice, it is noticeable that the nature of international crises is so complicated that the identification of aggressor and victim becomes immensely difficult. This complexity of the nature of crises makes it impossible to prescribe a simple formula to overcome them. The second assumption never materializes, either, since countries do not make sacrifices on the international scene and refuse to cooperate if their

interests are at stake. In addition, experience has shown that governments on the two sides of a crisis attempt to support one of the sides owing to varying and conflicting geopolitical interests. The third assumption is also incompatible with historical facts. Evidence shows the main threat to global peace and security is posed by the major powers themselves.

Because the assumptions of collective security do not comply with the realities of international power politics, we are witness to the fact that the Security Council has hit a stalemate in fulfilling its inherent roles. This applies to the Syrian crisis, too.

4. Resolutions, vetoed resolutions and statements by the Security Council

On the Syrian crisis, the UN Security Council had passed 26 resolutions until 2018 in the areas of counter-terrorism, humanitarian activities, ceasefire, deployment of peacekeeping special mission, chemical disarmament, and approving the peace initiatives by institutions beyond the United Nations. During this period, there were 8 vetoed resolutions and 7 presidential statements.

A) Resolutions concerning ceasefire and the mission of peacekeeping forces

In mid-April 2012, the United States and Russia separately prepared draft resolutions to be presented to the UN Security Council on the Syrian crisis. Both drafts demanded the deployment of a 300-strong, unarmed military observer force in Syria in line with the six-point plan proposed by Kofi Annan. However, there were significant differences in the two drafts regarding referral to the six-point plan of the special envoy of the United Nations and Arab League, which included: the commitments of the Syrian government, access to international humanitarian law and the language of human rights, as well as the conditions required for the 300-strong monitoring force. Eventually, the US-proposed draft was agreed upon by the members and put to vote on 14 April 2012 at the Security Council and approved as the Resolution 2042 with the endorsement of all members of the Security Council. In the said resolution, in addition to expressing support for Kofi Annan's peace plan, which was brought before the Council on 23 February 2012, the

meticulous implementation of this plan by Syria was emphasized (S/RES/2042, 2012). In this resolution, safeguarding the security of the observers in Syria was also spotlighted, in such a way that in the paragraphs 5 and 6 of the resolution, the Syrian government authorities are called upon to lay the groundwork for the deployment of the observers, enabling them to carry out their activities freely (S/RES/2042, 2012).

On 20 April 2012, Russia presented a draft resolution to the Security Council. Afterwards, France, together with Germany and Portugal, submitted another draft resolution to the Council. The objective of both resolutions was to monitor the cessation of military operations by the government and armed groups and the full implementation of Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan. The mandate of this delegation was foreseen to be 90 days long, which could be extended by the Security Council in the future if it was successful in ending the clashes. Under this resolution, the United Nations monitoring delegation in Syria, made of 300 unarmed, military observers and the required number of civilians, would be established. With the full endorsement of the Security Council members, this initiative was approved as Resolution 2043 on 21 April 2012 (S/RES/2043, 21 April 2012). However, the mission of these observers was halted in less than two months on 16 June 2012 due to being targeted by the terrorists.

The UN Security Council passed Resolution 2059 on 20 July 2012. In this resolution, the Security Council extended the mission of the UN observers for 30 days taking into consideration the report by the Secretary-General and the Security Council verifying the discontinuation of the use of heavy arms and the lessening of hostilities and clashes in Syria. Accordingly, the Security Council demanded all Syrian parties to guarantee the security, freedom, and access of the UN observers without any restriction and attributed the main responsibility in this regard to the Syrian government officials. The Security Council asked the Secretary-General to present a report about the implementation of this resolution in Syria within 15 days (S/RES/2059, 20 July 2012). That said, since the tensions and skirmishes did not subside, the peacekeeping mission failed, and as a result, Kofi Annan resigned from his post as the special envoy in 2012.

B) Supporting political dialogue for the transition period

In its Resolution 2254 passed on 18 December 2015, the Security Council calls upon all Syrian parties and groups to take necessary measures to protect the civilians including the members of ethnic and religious communities, and cooperate for this purpose under the supervision of the United Nations. Security Council confers the main responsibility to protect the Syrian people from the Syrian authorities. In this regard, the Security Council considers an inclusive political process under the leadership of Syria, which also corresponds to the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, as the sole sustainable solution for the Syrian crisis. For this purpose, the Security Council underscores the full implementation of the terms of Resolution 2118 (2013) and the statement released on 30 June 2012. Resolution 2254 also lays emphasis on the statement of the International Syria Support Group, issued during the Vienna multilateral talks (30 October 2015 and 14 November 2015) concerning the political transition process in Syria on the basis of the contents of the Geneva communiqué. Therefore, to achieve this goal, set in motion the process of political transition in Syria and settle the political disputes in the country, the UN Security Council endorses the Geneva communiqué and Vienna statements and builds on them as foundations for the establishment of a democratic government in Syria (S/RES/2254, 18 December 2015).

In its resolution 2336 passed in 2016, the Security Council emphasizes the importance of the full and immediate implementation of a ceasefire in Syria. The liberation of Aleppo, as a strategic victory for the Syrian State and its allies, laid the groundwork for a ceasefire in this country, and Russia called on the Security Council members to pass a resolution in support of the ceasefire proposed by Russia and Turkey. Western countries demanded amendments in this proposal. They asked that the delivery of assistance to the besieged areas was also included and that peace talks in Kazakhstan proceed with the supervision of the United Nations. These amendments were eventually agreed upon by Russia. Based on this resolution, the ceasefire had to be enforced in the entire Syrian territory, excluding the regions controlled by the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS. The Kurd militias, also referred to as the People's Protection Units (YPG), were outside the scope of this plan.

Moreover, in this resolution, the necessity of convening a meeting between the Syrian government and the representatives of the opposition in Kazakhstan on 26 January 2016 was emphasized. The resolution 2336 comprises two main pivots which include 1- ceasefire and, 2- political talks in Astana as a precursor to the 8 February talks in Geneva (S/RES/2336/31 Dec./ 2016). Other points such as respecting the territorial integrity of Syria and rescue operations were previously alluded to in other resolutions, including Resolution 2254.

C) Security Council resolutions on humanitarian concerns

On 21 February 2014, the Security Council passed Resolution 2139. Considering the acuteness of clashes in Syria, this resolution expressed concern about the growing number of asylum-seekers and refugees in Syria and its destabilizing impacts in the region. Security Council condemned terrorist attacks, which represent one of the most serious threats to global peace, in all its forms. With the continuation of the critical situation in Syria and the unattainability of a comprehensive political solution, the Security Council accentuated the contents of the Geneva communiqué dated 30 June 2012, calling on all parties and groups in Syria to end their clashes. In this resolution, the Security Council asked the Syrian authorities to give the United Nations immediate, safe, and unrestricted access for delivering humanitarian assistance (S/RES/2139, 22, 2014).

On 14 July 2014, the Security Council passed the resolution 2165. In this resolution, the United Nations issued permission for delivering humanitarian assistance to civilians in Syria without the consent of the Syrian government, and considering the paragraph 3 of the resolution, the United Nations foresaw a "monitoring mechanism" to ensure the implementation of the resolution in Syria. In addition, the resolution once again attributed the main responsibility to protect the Syrian people to the Syrian government and laid emphasis on it. The terms of the resolution would be implemented for a period of 180 days in Syria and would be reviewed by the Syrian government afterward (S/RES/2165/ 14 July 2014). In Resolution 2165, Russia has ensured that a monitoring mechanism would be put in place in line with which it could notify the Syrian authorities of all happenings and plans. Therefore, although the

resolution was passed by the Security Council, the presence of a monitoring group to supervise compliance with the commitments set out in these resolutions was also approved (Christensen, J. S, 2018: 35).

The other resolution passed in this regard was the Resolution 2191 issued in December 2014. In this resolution, the Security Council presented a report by the Secretary-General deploring that as a result of violence in Syria, more than 191,000 people were killed since the eruption of the crisis in the country, while around 1 million Syrians had been displaced since the passing of the Resolution 2165 (2014). Therefore, the Security Council pointed to the non-abidance of the warring parties by the Resolution 2139 (2014) and Resolution 2165 (2014), warning that the violations that had taken place represented crimes against humanity. Therefore, all factions and parties in Syria were bound to comply with the principles of human rights and international law and enforce the entire decisions of the Security Council, including stopping attacks against the civilians, schools, medical facilities, the prohibition of the unconditional use of arms, as well as the prohibition of the use of civilian starvation as a means of war, the prevention of the siege of populated regions and prohibition of the widespread use of torture, maltreatment, summary execution, illegal massacre, sexual and gendered violence, and child trafficking and child abuse. In this resolution, fighting against Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Al-Nusra Front terrorist groups is underscored. Paragraph 3 of the resolution urges the indictment of the violators of human rights and international law in Syria. Although the Western governments and the United States sought to refer the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court, Russia and China were opposed to such a measure. Therefore, the Security Council does not give a clear explanation about the indictment of the violators of human rights. Under the Resolution 2165 of the Security Council, a monitoring mechanism for facilitating humanitarian assistance through border crossings to areas beleaguered by the terrorist groups would be implemented (S/RES/2191, 17 Dec. 2014).

Subsequent to the partial implementation of the above-mentioned resolutions in Syria, the Security Council passed Resolution 2258 on 22 December 2015 under Article 25 of Chapter V of the UN Charter. In this

resolution, a report on the number of civilians besieged in Syria and the killing and displacement of millions of people in the country was presented. Accordingly, the Security Council, affirming the Resolution 2175 (2014) and 2165 (2014), condemns all terrorist groups and parties involved in human rights violations. In addition, in line with one of the paragraphs of the resolution, it was expressed that out of 349,000 civilians besieged in Syria, only 3.5 percent of them were supplied with humanitarian assistance. This resolution emphasized points such as a) extension of paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Resolution 2165 (2014) of the Security Council until 10 January 2017, b) emphasis on a political solution to settle the Syrian crisis, enforcing the declaration of 30 June 2012 and the declaration of the International Syria Support Group in the Vienna multilateral talks in October 2015, and c) requesting the Secretary-General to present his report concerning the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions, particularly the Resolution 2139 (2014), Resolution 2165 (2014) and Resolution 2191 (2014) (S/RES/2258, 22 Dec. 2015).

With the escalation of hostilities in Eastern Aleppo, the Security Council passed Resolution 2328 on 19 December 2016. In this resolution, the United Nations demanded Syria's immediate access to humanitarian aid and the evacuation of Syrian citizens in line with international humanitarian laws and regulations. As a result, the Security Council demanded sufficient monitoring and the impartiality of the Syrian authorities and entities to evacuate Aleppo's civilians (S/RES/2328, 19 Dec. 2016).

The other resolution passed in this respect is Resolution 2332. In this resolution, the Security Council reviews the humanitarian situation in Syria, once again stating that 13 million Syrians were in need of medical aid. Against the backdrop of the advances made by the Syrian forces in 2016 in repossessing different areas of Syria from ISIS and Al-Nusra Front, there were still regions controlled by these groups, which detrimentally impacted the stability of Syria and had destructive effects on the civilians in this country, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Syrians. In this resolution, the Security Council urged the Syrian authorities, as well as all parties involved in the conflict, to protect civilians, journalists, and individuals

in the country under international law. This resolution strongly condemned extrajudicial detentions, torture, kidnapping, and hostage-taking of individuals, urging all Syrian parties to end such actions (S/RES/2332, 21 Dec. 2016).

On 24 February 2018, the Security Council passed Resolution 2401 (S/RES/2401 /24 Feb. 2018). The governments of Kuwait and Sweden had submitted the draft resolution to the Security Council. In line with this resolution, a 30-day ceasefire across Syria and humanitarian access to besieged areas of the country, particularly Northern Hama, Raqqa, Idlib, and Eastern Ghouta would be enforced. In this resolution, the Security Council highlighted the widespread violation of human rights in Syria, demanding an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities. The goal of the ceasefire was enabling humanitarian access to the war zones and pulling out the wounded from the battleground. Even so, in this resolution, the terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Nusra Front, and Al-Qaeda were not subject to the ceasefire agreed, and no country or group was bound to cease the fighting operations against these certain groups.

D) Resolutions condemning terrorism in Syria

In almost all Security Council resolutions on Syria, there is a reference to the necessity of countering terrorism. Specifically, the Resolution 2170 passed on 15 August 2014 can be cited. In this resolution, the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria are primarily stressed. Moreover, in addition to condemning ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front, individuals, groups, and entities affiliated with Al-Qaeda, the resolution demanded the freezing of their assets, imposition of a travel ban, and arms embargo against them. This resolution condemned the recruitment of foreign forces and militants (S/RES/2170 / 15 /August/2014). The resolution was passed by the Security Council on 24 September 2014. In this resolution, the Security Council lays out provisions for countering the threats posed by the foreign terrorists, stipulating that terrorism, without considering its motivations, is one of the most serious threats to global peace and security. In this resolution, the Security Council expresses concern over the growth of terrorism in different parts of the world, calling on governments and international organizations to get involved in

combating these terrorist groups proliferating worldwide (S/RES/2178, 24 Sep. 2014).

As to terrorism, the other resolution passed by the Security Council on Syria was the Resolution 2199, made of 31 paragraphs, which the Council adopted on 12 February 2015 under the Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In this resolution, the Security Council underlines countering acts of terrorism in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, including human rights laws. In this document, the role of financial sanctions against terrorist groups according to the UN Charter and the initiation of a multilateral approach to eliminate the ISIS terror group in partnership with countries, international and regional organizations have been underlined as important in reconstructing international peace and security while emphasizing the implementation of Resolution 1267 (1999) and Resolution 1989 (2011) as key instruments of weakening, isolation, disempowerment and countering terrorism (S/RES/2199, 12 Feb. 2015). In the Resolution 2319, which was passed on December 2016, the persistence of the activities of ISIS, Al-Nusra Front, and Al-Qaeda, recruiting members from across the world, is underlined and any use of chemical weapons in Syria is condemned and the use of chemical weapons and violation of international law are spotlighted. This document, while emphasizing the Resolution 2118 of the Security Council, expressly states that no party in Syria is entitled to use, stockpile, maintain or transfer chemical materials, and in case of a breach, the Security Council will adopt the necessary measures (S/RES/2319,17 Nov. 2016).

On 13 December 2018, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2449. In this resolution, the Security Council strongly deplores the rise of the level of violence, exacerbation of clashes, and killing of tens of thousands of people in Syria, emphasizing that more than 13 million people in the country needed immediate medical aid and humanitarian assistance while more than 6 million Syrians were displaced. In this resolution, the Security Council asked all Syrian parties and groups to aim at suppressing and combating the terror groups ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups designated by the UN Security Council. Moreover, all groups and parties are demanded to 1) bring all actions to fight terrorist groups in compliance with international laws,

particularly those governing human rights, international rights of the refugees, and international humanitarian law, and that 2) all parties and groups involved in the conflict in Syria must fully observe their commitments in protecting civilians, including journalists and civilians entangled in the war under international law. Moreover, in this document, the Security Council postulates that the main responsibility for protecting these people lies with the Syrian government (S/RES/2449, 13 Dec. 2018).

E) Chemical disarmament resolutions

With the intensification of clashes in Syria and the deployment of chemical weapons against civilians in August 2013, the United States first imposed sanctions against Syria in response to the crisis and then threatened a limited military strike after a while. Based on the agreements made between Russia and the United States, they stated that Syria had to declare the quantity of its chemical weapons as well as its military hardware and infrastructure within one week, and that the chemical weapons of Syria had to be transferred to Russia or a different country. After these agreements were made, the Western states, together with some Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Turkey, pursued the issuance of a resolution at the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In fact, they were after obligating Syria to cooperate with international inspectors to refrain from using chemical weapons, and sought to take action to launch military strikes against Syria in case this commitment was breached (Ahmadian, Bahrami, 2015: 9). Therefore, the Resolution 2118 of the Security Council, proposed by the United States, was approved by all members of the Council. This resolution included a preamble and 21 paragraphs. In this resolution, the deployment of chemical weapons in the suburbs of Damascus on 21 August 2013 was highlighted, but no party was named as responsible for this attack. This resolution provides that any use of chemical weapons poses a threat to international peace and security. In another paragraph of the resolution, it is noted that in case of non-cooperation with international inspectors by Syria, the use of military force against this country would be contingent upon the issuance of another UN Security Council resolution. In this resolution, it is emphasized that none of the parties had a right to use chemical weapons,

stockpile, maintain or transfer such weapons to other countries or non-state actors either directly or indirectly. Moreover, it was stipulated that by mid-2014, the Syrian government should abolish its entire arsenal of chemical weapons and that the Syrian government and parties were bound to fully cooperate with the United Nations representatives. In this resolution, the necessity of the execution of the terms of the Geneva Conference on Syria and the importance of making efforts to hold the Geneva II Conference on Syria with the participation of all parties involved, in order to settle the crisis, were underlined (S/RES/2118, 27 Sep. 2013).

In addition, according to paragraph 21 of this resolution, in case of the non-observance of this resolution and the violation of human rights in Syria, the Security Council could take action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. About this, Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, stated that this resolution would be implemented under the supervision of the United Nations and Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with full respect to the Syrian sovereignty. He also affirmed that this resolution was not passed on the basis of the provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and in case of a full-blown violation of humanitarian law, the Security Council could take action under the Chapter VII (quoted in Christensen, J. S, 2018: 36). The other important point included in this resolution is the Security Council's decision to prohibit the use of chemical weapons beginning on 27 September 2013, and this decision is equivalent to the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons by all states, including the signatories of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the non-signatories, as well as the non-state actors, which encompasses other international crises in addition to the Syrian crisis (Christensen, J. S, 2018: 36).

Subsequent to the reuse of chemical weapons in the Syrian crisis, the Security Council passed Resolution 2209 on 6 March 2015. In this resolution, the use of chemical weapons such as Chlorine gas in Syria was condemned, and with the reaffirmation of the Resolution 2118, it was stated that the government and other parties involved in the Syrian conflict are not entitled to stockpile, develop and produce chemical weapons, either directly or indirectly. Moreover, in this resolution, it was affirmed that any use of toxic

chemical substances such as the Chlorine gas constitutes a violation of the Resolution 2118, and in case such weapons are used by the Syrian government or parties, the laws of the Chemical Weapons Convention[1] would be breached.

The executive council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons had stated in its reports that these weapons were used frequently in Syria, representing the first instance of the use of chemical weapons within the boundaries of a member state of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (S/RES/2209, 6 March 2015).

The other resolution passed concerning the use of chemical weapons in Syria was Resolution 2191 adopted in December 2014. This resolution demands the meticulous and effective implementation of Resolution 2139 (2014) and Resolution 2165 (2014). Moreover, this resolution underlines the cessation of attacks on Syrian military personnel and civilians, assault on schools, medical facilities, the unconditional use of chemical weapons, and the siege of the highly-populated areas (S/RES/2191/Dec./ 2014).

In Resolution 2268, which was passed on 26 February 2016, the Security Council emphasized the process of formal negotiations between the Syrian government and its opponents in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Resolution 2254 (2015), facilitated by the special envoy of the Secretary-General. In this resolution, the Security Council appreciated the International Syria Support Group and demanded political transition under the leadership of Syria as well as free elections in this country based on the 30 June 2012 Geneva communiqué, so that on this basis, the implementation of Resolution 2254 could be also facilitated. Therefore, all Syrian parties were asked to cooperate with the United Nations in this regard and end hostilities (S/RES/2268 26 Feb. 2016).

The said resolution completely endorses the United States and Russia as the heads of the International Syria Support Group. In this resolution, both countries demand a full ceasefire and the termination of all attacks in Syria beginning on 27 February 2016. Russia and the United States have laid out

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1. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction

conditions for the parties involved in the conflict, which include 1) an end to all attacks using different ammunitions including missiles, mortar bombs, and anti-armor missiles against Syrian government forces or any party fighting alongside the Damascus government troops; 2) giving permission to aid organizations and humanitarian assistance bodies to enter the regions controlled by the opposition; the proportionate use of military force, not more than what is needed, to repel the threats, provided that it is aimed at self-defense; and 3) the full implementation of the Resolution 2254 of the Security Council which was approved by all member states on 18 December 2015.

In Resolution 2314, the Security Council once again condemns the use of any sort of toxic chemical substances against civilians. Moreover, in this resolution, the Council decides to extend the joint research mission approved in Resolution 2235 until 18 November 2016. This commission was launched in order to identify individuals, parties, and groups that attempt to use chemical weapons against the Syrian people (S/RES/2314/31 Oct. 2016).

F) The vetoed resolutions

Since the eruption of the Syrian crisis, Western states resorted to numerous tactics for pressuring the government of Bashar al-Assad and preferably overthrowing it. Accordingly, one can point to the preparation of draft resolutions by France, Germany, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which were presented to the Security Council between 2011 and 2017. The majority of these drafts blamed the Syrian government as the main culprit in this crisis, and have been aimed at changing the political regime of Syria, removing Bashar al-Assad from power, and incriminating his government. However, these draft resolutions were blocked by Russia and China and were not adopted. Moscow and Beijing believed these resolutions would not only fail to address the Syrian crisis, but would lead to the escalation of the crisis in Syria, benefiting the terrorists and rebels involved in the conflict. Generally, since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Moscow and Beijing have vetoed 8 draft resolutions on this conflict at the UN Security Council.

Table 1. Resolutions on the Syria crisis vetoed at the Security Council (2011-2018)

Resolution topic	Veto	Date	Document
Regime change in Syria and removing Bashar al- Assad from power	First veto by Russia and China	4 October 2011	S/2011/612
Regime change in Syria and removing Bashar al- Assad from power	Second veto by Russia and China	4 February 2012	S/2012/77
Condemnation of the violation of human rights by the Syrian government	Third veto by Russia and China	19 July 2012	S/2012/538
Referral of the case of Syria to the International Court of Justice	Fourth veto by Russia and China	22 May 2014	S/2014/348
Cessation of hostilities and ceasefire in Syria with the aim of weakening the central government	Fifth veto by Russia and China	5 December 2016	S/2016/1026
Holding Damascus accountable over the use of chemical weapons	Sixth veto by Russia and China	28 February 2017	S/2017/172
Holding Damascus accountable over the use of chemical weapons	Seventh veto by Russia and China	12 April 2017	S/2017/315
Holding Damascus accountable over the use of chemical weapons	Eighth veto by Russia and China	16 November 2017	S/2017/962

Table 2. The United Nations Security Council resolutions concerning the Syrian crisis (2011-2018)

Security Council resolutions on humanitarian concerns	Resolution 2139	22.02.2014	S/RES/2139
	Resolution 2165	14.07.2014	S/RES/2165
	Resolution 2191	14.07.2014	S/RES/2191
	Resolution 2258	22.12.2015	S/RES/2258
	Resolution 2328	19.12.2016	S/RES/2328
	Resolution 2332	21.12.2016	S/RES/2332
Resolutions concerning terrorism	Resolution 2170	15.08.2014	S/RES/2170
	Resolution 2178	15.08/2014	S/RES/2178
	Resolution 2199	12.02.2015	S/RES/2199
	Resolution 2249	20.08.2015	S/RES/2249
	Resolution 2254	18.12.2015	S/RES/2015
	Resolution2319	17.11.2016	S/RES/2319
	Resolution2449	13.12.2018	S/RES/2449
Resolutions overseeing ceasefire and the mission of the peacekeeping group	Resolution 2042	14.04.2012	S/RES/2042
	Resolution 2043	21.14.2012	S/RES/ 2043
	Resolution 2059	20.07.2012	S/RES/2059
	Resolution 2052	27.06.2012	S/RES/2052
	Resolution 2235	07.08.2015	S/RES/2035
	Resolution 2254	18.12.2015	S/RES/2254
	Resolution 2236	31.12.2016	S/RES/2236
	Resolution 2401	24.02.2018	S/RES/2401
Chemical disarmament resolutions	Resolution 2118	18.12.2015	S/RES/2118
	Resolution 2314	17.11.2016	S/RES/2314
	Resolution 2209	06.03.2015	S/RES/2209
	Resolution 2191	17.12.2014	S/RES/2191
	Resolution 2268	26.02.2016	S/RES/2268

G) Security Council presidential statements

Presidential statements are considered as the moderating decision-making leverages of the Security Council. This category of documents represents an important instrument in diplomacy. Actually, they are the only framework that the Security Council can utilize at a level lower than the resolutions. Aside from its resolutions, the Security Council has issued different statements to settle the Syrian crisis. Although not legally binding, these statements have resulted in immense international pressure on the parties to the conflict in Syria. In all six presidential statements, themes such as the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of Syria, political transition of Syria to a democratic state with the participation of all groups, condemnation of the violation of humanitarian law and terrorism, and calling on the parties to the crisis to observe the law of armed conflict have been upheld.

Table 3. Presidential statements of the Security Council the Syrian crisis (2011- 2018)

Humanitarian concerns	3 August 2012	S/PRST/2011
Terrorism	21 March 2012	S/PRST 2012
Emphasis on Kofi Anna's Six- point plan	5 April 2012	S/PEST/ 2012
Humanitarian affairs	2 October 2013	S/ PRST/ 2013
Terrorism	24 April 2015	S/PRST/ 2015
Terrorism	17 August 2015	S/PRST/ 2015

5. Analysis of the UN Security Council inefficacy

With regard to the Syrian crisis, the UN Security Council has faced four essential issues in fulfilling its inherent responsibilities which caused differences of opinion among the member states; therefore prevented its efficient decision-making. Each of these issues pertains to the assumptions of the collective security theory.

As the first assumption of collective security theory indicates, there was a harsh disagreement among the Security Council members in defining the nature of the Syrian crisis. The Western states in the Security Council consider

the clashes in Syria as a violent suppression of the peaceful protests and widespread violation of human rights by the Syrian government, declaring the Syrian government as an aggressor that is chiefly responsible for the escalation. This is while the Syrian government and its allies maintain this government is itself a victim of such terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Nusra Front and a target of foreign conspiracies. Moreover, the Syrian allies, namely Russia, Iran, and China have consistently argued that the Syrian government has been fighting the terrorists and lawfully cracking down on the violent insurgency of terrorists and criminals. Therefore, China and Russia have vetoed the draft resolutions that were in the line of condemnation of the Syrian government. The fragile policies of the regional countries have made it challenging to achieve an international agreement. On one side, the regional allies of Syria, namely Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon back the Syrian regime, while on the other side, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Western states have been among the supporters of the Syrian opposition. As a result, a division of powers has emerged in the region on supporting the Syrian regime and supporting the opposition. These complicated geostrategic relationships in the region have underpinned the growth of differences at the Security Council over the Syrian crisis, such that the United States attempts to support the opposition in order to contain Iran's regional influence, while Russia, in order to cement its influence in the region, supports the Bashar al-Assad regime.

In addition, several neutral states, particularly India, Brazil and South Africa are also partially supporting the Syrian government and do not concur with the Security Council's Western member states in defining the nature of the Syrian crisis. As a result, the existence of different interpretations and deep differences of opinion among the member states in defining the nature of the Syrian crisis has translated in the Security Council not being able to achieve a comprehensive agreement as to the definition and framework construction of this crisis. Consequently, any action that targeted the Bashar al-Assad government as the source of the crisis would face negative backlash from Russia and China. In the draft resolution of 4 October 2011, it was stipulated that in case Bashar al-Assad refused to accept the resolution, the United Nations could slap sanctions on the Syrian government. However, this

resolution was vetoed by Russia and China, which are among Syria's allies (S/PV.6627, 4 Oct. 2011, p. 4). The second UN Security Council resolution in line with the previous resolution was vetoed by Russia and China on 4 February 2012. This resolution supported the initiative of the Arab League demanding the removal of Bashar al-Assad from power. This caused apprehension to Russia and China as they believed issuing a resolution against the Syrian government would lay the groundwork for military intervention in Syria and enable regime change in the country. For this reason, after vetoing the first draft resolution, Russia explicitly warned that it would not allow a military intervention in Syria. Therefore, a lack of agreement on the Syrian crisis and deep difference of opinions among the Security Council members on who is the culprit and who is the victim resulted in the inability of the Security Council to adopt a single resolution on the Syrian crisis more than one year after the eruption of the crisis.

The second assumption of collective security theory implies that states work together to end a crisis. While in the Syrian crisis, two rival blocs have made the crisis bipolar and hard to manage. Although a number of internal factors, including the one-party system, ethnic and sectarian discrimination, a weak economy, widespread financial and administrative corruption, and a lack of adequate response to popular demands for political reform, have played a major role in shaping the Syrian crisis. But, foreign actors and their Conflicts of interests, different perceptions, and perspectives between influential domestic, regional, and international actors involved in the crisis have turned it into a deep and complex one. Regional and international actors who are involved in the Syrian crisis can be divided into supporters of the Syrian regime and supporters of the Syrian opposition: The first group is actors who insist on resolving the Syrian conflict peacefully without fundamental reform in the political structure of Syria. This group includes a range of powerful countries and global actors such as Russia and China, and regional actors such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon. In the second group are countries such as the United States, the European Union, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Zionist Regime. Although each of the actors in the second group pursues diverse goals and motives, but they have followed three

common goals, namely the removal of Bashar al-Assad, countering the influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, and challenging the Russian geopolitical leverage. Obviously, each of the actors involved in the Syrian crisis is trying to guide the path of developments in a way that guarantees their maximum interests in this country. This has created a zero-sum game situation that has made it very difficult to compromise and create a political solution to the political crisis in Syria. Therefore, the second assumption of the collective security faced a deadlock in the Syrian crisis.

The third assumption of the collective security theory indicates that major power cooperates in containing an international crisis. But the conflicting geopolitical interests of Russia and China on one hand and the Western states, on the other hand, spayed the Security Council in practice. In order to achieve their goals, which include superiority in the power equilibrium and maximizing their share of military power and regional influence, the regional powers have done their utmost in the Syrian crisis in favor of the opposition. Therefore, the interested states have acted in this crisis according to the principle of self-help and national interest, and have not made their national interest a function of the principles and objectives of the UN. In this context, the five permanent members of the Security Council have taken steps in the Syrian conflict reflecting their own interests rather than serving the prevention of crisis. Accordingly, major powers pay attention to the modality of the distribution of power among themselves and build on different crises to maximize benefits and change the power equilibrium in their favor. In relation to this conflict, the Security Council utilized all tools at its disposal; however, the existence of a conflict of interests among the member states on such issues as military intervention in Syria and referring the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court undermined the efficiency of this organization, and despite numerous resolutions on human rights in Syria, we are still witnessing to the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law in this country. For instance, given the critical situation of Syria, Russia has three key interests in the embattled country: 1) Russia is the main supplier of arms to Syria, which constitutes approximately 10 percent of Russia's arms sales (NY Times, 2012). 2) The Tartous Port in Syria hosts one of the military

bases of Russia, such that this port has got political and symbolic implications for Russia. 3) In late 2011 and in 2012, Russia faced numerous challenges at home, and in this context, withstanding the pressures of the West against Syria was part of Russia's strategy, which the Russian President Vladimir Putin strongly advocated in order to shore up domestic support (Sputnik News, 2012).

Furthermore, the Western and NATO-led military intervention in Libya, which was pulled off in 2011 with the aim of toppling the political regime and supporting the civilians of the country, was designed to secure the economic interests of the West and win relief from the Russian pressure in terms of energy transactions with Europe. On this basis, in February 2011, the Security Council passed Resolution 1970 and Resolution 1973 on the basis of Articles 41 and 42 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, mandating military intervention in Libya and terminating the tyrannical rule of Muammar al-Qaddafi. Given the concern they had with regard to the experience of Libya and NATO's intervention in this country, Russia and China strongly objected to military intervention in Syria and blocked the issuance of a resolution permitting a military campaign against Syria. Even it was the case that Russia emphasized the observation of international law norms by the Western countries, which means Russia was after equilibrium of powers and striking a geopolitical balance in the Middle East. As a result, the experience of the intervention of Western countries in Libya and the adoption of a resolution which led to the toppling of the regime in this country caused Russia and China to be concerned about the prospects of compromising their strategic interests, and set out to oppose the Western states. Therefore, in the context of the Persian proverb, saying, "a knife doesn't cut its own handle," it is outside the jurisdiction and capability of the international organizations, particularly the UN Security Council, to compel the major powers to act against their strategic interests, whereas the powerful players have been the founders of the international organizations. Accordingly, it can be said that powerful players on the international scene merely capitalize on the international organizations to show off their prowess and it is their strategic interests that determine the

trajectory and direction of international organizations, and in case these entities do not serve the interests of major powers, they will be sidelined.

The fourth factor, not last, vis-à-vis the fourth assumption of the collective security theory, was the complex nature of the Syrian crisis such that the member states have not been able to achieve a comprehensive and mutually-agreed solution with regard to the crisis. Each of the major powers and engaged parties has come up with different solutions meeting their own interests, so it has been difficult to find a common denominator between the solutions put forward. As a result, the Security Council, which fully mirrors the conflicting interests of the international community, has been incapacitated in finding a dynamic solution to the Syrian crisis. The reason behind the complexity of the civil crisis in Syria has to do with the numerousness of opposition groups as well as the multiplicity of external alignments and predispositions on the regional and international levels. While the war on Syria is waged by numerous parties, the variety of alliances has resulted in the multiplicity of movements and terrorist groups. When the differences of the beneficiary governments outside Syria reach their peak, it is intrinsic that these differences are reflected in the groups involved and beneficiary parties, making the attainment of a solution complicated.

6. Conclusion

The Syrian crisis began in March 2011 subsequent to the Syrian people's protests against political, economic, social inequalities, as well as with the prolongation of domestic strife, religious tensions, and ethnic prejudices, the crisis became more intricate in its dimensions, while with the involvement of foreign players, it took on regional and international proportions. Therefore, considering the strategic position of Syria, regional heavyweights such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia as well as Israel have been working to undermine the empowerment of their rivals in the region in the context of their own potential and power or through alliances with other regional and international actors. Major international powers, such as the United States, Russia, and the European Union also obligated themselves to support the Syrian opposition or the Syrian government in order to achieve their desired goals and tone down

the influence of their rivals in the region, and owing to these competitions and contradictions, which the regional and international powers got involved in during the course of the Syrian crisis, this domestic dilemma eventually morphed into a proxy conflict. Therefore, with the involvement of the majority of international and regional powers and the high degree of interference by these powers, the Security Council attempted to take action to manage and contain the crisis and draw an end to the untenable situation, but considering the complexity of the nature of the Syrian crisis, the extreme conflict of interests between the major powers and the political rivalry of the regional powers, it was practically botched in taking an effectual decision.

All the same, the Security Council has made achievements on the path of establishing peace and preserving international security in the Syrian crisis in terms of moderating the crisis. The most important actions that the Security Council has successfully concluded with regard to the Syrian conflict include: 1) appointing the special envoy of the United Nations and deploying peacekeeping forces as well as facilitating the process of humanitarian action through border crossings; 2) dispatching relief aid, such as medicine and foodstuff to the civilians besieged in different regions of Syria; 3) facilitating the running of international conferences to address the Syrian crisis, in the form of Geneva and Vienna conferences; 4) issuing numerous statements and communiqués concerning human rights, counterterrorism, and refugees; 5) efforts to bring under control, collect and dismantle the warehouses of chemical weapons in Syria, and 6) efforts to initiate the process of dialogue and political negotiations to settle the Syrian crisis. Perhaps the most important success of the Security Council was to obliterate the chemical weapons stockpiled in Syria.

In the Syrian crisis, the inefficiency of the Security Council on high political issues has shown that it urgently needs structural reforms, including conditioning the veto power, banning the veto power on humanitarian issues, expanding the Security Council's mandate on gross human rights abuses, and increasing its permanent and non-permanent members for more global representation. If structural reforms do not take place at the Security Council, its inaction will call into question the raison d'etat of this institution.

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