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Syrian Crisis and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P): Between Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention

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Abstract

The development of sovereignty as a core concept in International Relations is a major significant developments of Westphalia revolution. Promoted by International Law and the charter of the United Nations, the sanctity of sovereignty has received its loudest support. However, the realization of interdependence of human society has again produced a world community with codes, ethics, norms and morality for securing peace. The adoption in 2005 of R2p at the global summit sounded largely that the world is a community that places high premium on the idealism of world stability, harmony and peace to the detest of dictatorship. Thus in Libya, the sanctity of R2P rose to secure the authority ship of sovereignty to safeguard the citizens of Libya while reversely; it has failed to act in Syria. While some put this failure at the doorstep of Syrian powerful friends, others argue that R2p implementation in Libya has given it a bad name. It is in this contest that the argument is situated, using idealism as prime plank for analyzing the failure of the global system to take action in the crisis that has snowballed into an armed conflict and the resurgence of a 2nd Cold War amongst the great powers.

Key Words: R2P, Sovereignty, Humanitarian Intervention, Idealism, International Law.

Introduction

By the start of International Law, some fundamental ideas were deemed not violable; an example was integrity of the territory. Within its territory, a state has unlimited authority and is superior; states regulate events unhindered including individual and properties within its borders. Consequently, no none within its borders could assert more rights more than the ones the state has given, and there was absence of supreme and higher power within the territory. As a result, the manner with which a state conducted its affairs within its borders was not of concern to any other country, due to the fact that any form of external involvement would be considered as complete breach of the state's sovereignty. Contemporarily, territorial sovereignty principle, though still fully in place, has within states approval been severally affected on a plethora of grounds especially by the forces of globalization and interdependency.

Other area in which there have been so many inhibitions on the principle of territorial sovereignty has been the emergence of democracy, activities of armed opposition groups, recurring dictatorial governments, internal conflict and human rights. The frail human rights structure in some countries and the rise of powerful global organizations seem to spotlight or probably placed human rights protection higher than the state. Thus, the conclusion is that it will be improper to wholly entrust states with protection of human rights. As De Vattel. (1969) questioned. "is there any other alternative in places where state's resources is intentionally deployed by a dictator to infringe on the rights of individuals for whom the attainment of protection and wellbeing, the state was ab initio established?" In the case of government's flagrant breach of human right, can a group of benevolent nations or a benevolent nation intrude? If yes, what has happened in Syria and why has states not intervened? If no, of what use is humanitarian intervention? This work attempts to interrogate the rights of intervention under R2P, its development including conditions of operation. It adopts idealism as theoretical tool in discussing the role that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), America and its allies play as provided by R2p in Syria. For the purpose of objectivity, a critique of R2p as a principle of intervention is also adopted due to the fact that there are still rigid adherents of the doctrine of territorial sovereignty. As Luttwak (1999, p.36) argued, "it may not be bad for all conflicting groups to allow for little armed violence; leaders charged with responsibility of policy making should withstand the emotions to interfere in the wars of others".

Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention: A Conceptual and Analytical Discourse

As earlier noted, the development of sovereignty as a core concept in global relations was one of the most important developments of Westphalia Revolution. Introduced into political theory by French writer, Jean Bodin, sovereignty is seen as the highest authority in a state without any restriction (cited in Appadorai, 1974, p.48). Thus, sovereignty was identified from the outset with royal absolutism, invoked to justify absolute (Palmer and Perkins, 2007; Anifowose and Enemuo, 1999). The definition is characterized by absolutism rather than responsibility, autocracy rather than legitimacy, coercion rather than persuasion. Krasner (2001) gave a contemporary definition of sovereignty to mean that nations are sovereign and free from one another inside their borders; citizens of a state are at liberty to decide the kind of government they wish to live.

The requisite inference to this assertion is the nonintervention principle; no nation has the right to interfere in the domestic matter of other nation. The absolute and coercive nature of sovereignty compelled Marx Weber to describe the state as a corporate institution with mandatory authority, implementing ceaseless control and asserts a monopoly of coercion over citizens and its border (1964, p.155). For Ian Brownlie, the state enjoys legality under international law with a designated boundary, lasting citizenry, an effectual leadership and sovereignty (1979 p.76). To John Hertz, sovereignty seems to be the chief international status symbol, as well as that which furnish the state as an actual entrance ticket into world politics (1989 p.89). The state according to Jean Bodin, is family aggregation and their shared interests governed by a sovereign power and by rationality (cited in Appadorai, 1975 p.48).

Between Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention: The Responsibility to Protect

It must be noted that the right of intervention under R2P was the initiative of the International Commission of Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS); R2P is a report produced in 2001 by the ICISS, established by the Canadian government, in collaboration with Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun in 2000 as a reaction to the history of disappointing humanitarian interventions, especially the 1999 Kosovo intervention (ICISS, 2001; Crossley, 2012; Evans, 2012). Endorsed and adopted by the UN in 2005 (Cinq-Mars, 2011, Petrusek, 2012), the R2P established clearer guidepost to determine when interference is the suitable channel for the approval of intervention and manner the involvement should be conducted. It is an explicit regulation for conducting humanitarian interventions. Rather than having the right under humanitarian intervention to interfere in the matters of other countries reactionally, R2P is about prevention, diplomatic persuasion and non- military actions including penalty and referral to International Criminal Court. While humanitarian intervention involves military action, r2p has to do with several actors; while humanitarian intervention concentrates only on the responsibilities of people with capacity to deploy military force (Evans, 2012). In all, R2P enshrined a state's duty to interfere and safeguard populations of other nation when that other nation has failed in its obligation to safeguard its population. Macrae and Harner (2003) argued that the ICISS conference in 2001 was a responsive answer to Kofi Anan's (2000 P. 48) question on nations autonomy and humanitarian intervention, "If for sure, humanitarian intervention is an inappropriate smack on nations autonomy, how should the world react to a Srebrenica or Rwanda - to methodological and blatant abuse of human rights that have its impact on every dictum of our collective humanity?". Thus, the aims of the ICISS commission was to focus on the needs of individuals harmed by humanitarian catastrophe and afterwards, shift from discourse relating as to whether sovereignty supersede moral duty to interfere (Thomas, 2004; Evans, 2012). As a consequence of Rwandan genocide and global society negligence to intervene to halt the genocide, (Petrusek, 2013; Huriburt and Hassan, 2013), the idealist response to the ICISS became a report in 2001. The report explained that it is the duty of the global community to avert widespread barbarity (Petrusek, 2013) by social, economic and political means, diplomatic engagement through sanctions, referral to ICC and increased coercive means and as a final course of action, military response and restoration by ensuring justice and security to the victims and investigating the source of mass calamities (ICISS, 2001; Evans, 2012)

At the UN 2005 global conference, paragraphs 138 and 139 was adopted from resultant document of the 2001 ICISS reports. Evans Gareth argued that these paragraphs have given finality to the purview of r2p in four major crimes and into whom the responsibility of intervention rest. It is the primary duty of each nation to safeguard its population from crime against humanity, ethnic cleansing, genocide and war crimes and. These duties require forestalling of these malfeasances to include their urging through suitable and requisite methods. Germanely, the global community should motivate and assist countries in carrying out these duties and help the UNO to establish the capacity for early warning system (Evans, 2008; Onu, 2009). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), on 28 April, 2006, endorsed

its first Security Council reference to the R2P under resolution 1674 and another resolution 1894 on November 16, 2009 to ratify and adopt sections 138 and 139 of the 2005 global conference (UNRES, 2006; UNRES, 2009). In 2009, Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary General of UN, in a release report titled, "Implementing R2P", explained that the philosophies of R2P is tripodal: (i) emphasized the core duty of countries to safeguard their citizens from crime against humanity, ethnic cleansing, genocide and war crimes (ii) stresses the commitment of the global community to provides support to countries to build capability that will enable them safeguard their population from large scale cruelty including assisting those facing stress prior to the eruption of the crisis, (iii) explained that the global community has it as a duty to react promptly and definitely so as to avert and stop large scale cruelty when a country is evidently deficient in the protection of its citizens (GlobalR2P, 2009; UNRES, 2006; UNRES, 2009; Onu, 2009). The general summit of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) of July 2009, adopted its first resolution on R2P (RES/63/308), introduced by Guatemala and co-sponsored by 67 countries, including all EU member states, set as priority, its implementation by the UNO, regional organizations and by diplomatic mechanisms to enforce the responsibility of a sovereign state, and where as last resort, coercion (GlobalR2P, 2009; Onu, 2009).

Military Intervention under R2P

The global community stands solid on the issues of human protection. On such issues, within the neighborhood of R2P, the element of consent or violations is non-negotiable. It must be put on notice that as far as international law relies on consent, there exist classes of norms that are binding on all states irrespective of lack of express consent. These laws and treaties under international law are called *jus cogens* or peremptory norms. Sinclair (1984) argued that under the norms, no state is permitted to derogate from any of such rules defined by the 53rd article of Vienna Convention relating to Law of Treaties. According to him, the treaty explains *jus cogens* as incontrovertible standard of international law, standard that is acceptable and acknowledge by the comity of nations as well as standard in which defamation is not allowed permitted and which can only be adjusted through concomitant standard of holistic international law bearing similar character. They serve the most fundamental interest of the international community and exceptionally bind all nations.

Thus, specified in the general conventions (1949) and its extended protocol, (1977) and the R2P, are humanitarian laws of crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, genocide and war crimes. The general convention has entrusted the responsibility of enforcement of *jus cogens* by widening the responsibility of states beyond boundaries of other nationals abroad. This was what Russia relied on when it annexed Crimea. In this context, states are empowered and obliged to find solution to harm caused by other nations against their own population and inside their own borders. This again explain why Turkey responded with proportional arms when in October 2012, five of its citizens were killed by Syrian mortar fire along its border with Syria and most recently, the firing down of Syrian jet flying over Turkish airspace (ICRTOP, 2013; Al Jazeera, 2014; BBC, 2014).

The framework that empowers states extra-territorial jurisdiction for the enforcement of R2P (ICISS, 2001) argued, is not only conferred by the UN but also

derived from the Geneva conventions among other conventions and treaties. In his defence of deploying force outside UN mandate for restoring rules, peace and stability, Cassese (2001) explained that, such actions cover: gross and systematized human rights breach; lack of political will by a country to halt such breaches; incapacity of UNSC pursuance to a veto; and every available method of peace to settle the dispute have been unsuccessful; the involvement should be that of a alliance of countries and force should be used only to stop abuses. This position falls in tandem with that earlier argued by Evans, (2008; 2012) and Ban Ki-Moon (2009), which explained the tripod on which R2P stands. Now that all attempts to bring the crisis to an amicable end has failed, it is our opinion that the last option (coercion) be invoked so long as it meets the six criteria to justify an extra ordinary measure of intervention as stipulated by ICISS (2001), that includes, unbiased cause, just interference, last report, lawful authority, proportionate methods and rational prospect.

The International Community and the Syrian crisis: Issues at Stake

The president of Syria, Bashar al Assad and his wife Asma al Assad, a Sunni Muslim, born and educated in Britain (Golovinna, 2012), had earlier brought ray hopes for state reforms and democracy, however, a severe Syrian uprising for political and social discourse occurred within the next 12 months (July 2000 to August 2001) (HRW 2007), which alter the implementation of such reforms. At the end of the uprising, 10 prominent protesting leaders who had requested for crusade against civil disobedience and democratic elections, were arrested and imprisoned (Alan. 2003). The earlier crisis which started as a civil disobedience, graduated from minor demonstrations in January 2011 to full blown armed conflict in response to Arab spring that had swept through the region, human right abuses and official corruption in government. However, the full-scale war also known as Syrian revolt began in Daraa (a town in the South where the revolution was birthed) on March 15, 2011 and subsequently expanded nationwide (BBC, 2011).

The military was called in April 2011 to thwart the revolt and army shot at protesters throughout the nation (HRW, 2011). Following months of blockade by army (Oweis and Solomon, 2012), the protest evolved into an armed rebellion. The government's response to the protest, which came in form of large scale arrest and torture, couple with police and military brutality, made the crisis so asymmetrical that it led to simultaneous clashes across many towns and villages throughout the country. These atrocities committed by the Syrian security forces are reminiscent of Gaddafi's instruction to his supporters on February 22, 2011, 'don't show mercy, move from one home to another for the cockroaches that do not deserve to live' (The Economist, 2011) Following the clampdown by soldiers, several military officers deserted in support of the protesters while several of those protesting started bearing arms. On 4th June 2011, in a town called Jir Ash-Shugur, in Idlib province close the boundary with Turkey, the earliest example of armed rebellion took place as rioters burnt down a building where soldiers had shot at funeral demonstration. About eight security personnel lost their lives as protesters ransacked a police station and seized all the arms. Confrontation between rioters and security agencies continued owing

to the execution of some army officers by secret police due to their refusal to shoot at protesters (Joseph, 2011).

As a fact of idealists' assumption, if ethical considerations are the guiding norms of international politics, the management, control and security of those assumptions have a commitment in the R2P. For instance, in line with the criteria of R2P early warning system, the UNSC at the early stage adopted resolution S/RES/1970 which banned and freeze assets of Gaddafi and some important officials. It condemned regime sponsored violence and in accordance with article 13 (b) of the status of Rome which empowers the UNSC to pass humanitarian crimes to ICC, it referred the Libyan crisis and report of humanitarian crimes to the ICC for investigations and demanded that the government of Libya take every measures required to end the killing of civilians. It was in fact of evidence that ICC issued a warrant of arrest on Gaddafi and its revolutionary council. The intensification of the violence compelled UNSC in March 17, 2011 to adopt resolution S/RES/1973, which authorized a no fly zone over Libya and required means to safeguard the population (Crossley, 2012; Cinq-Mars, 2011).

International morality comprises such principles as opposition to tyranny. The enforcement of R2P principle three had its consequence in the March 19 intervention in Libya to protect civilians. There is also the UNSC assistance for France to intervene in March 2011 in Cote d'Ivoire, 2012 in Mali as well as referring Sudan to ICC (Petrasek, 2013), and the hunting of Joseph Koni, leader, Lord Resistant Army, an armed rebel group in Uganda, who incidentally is wanted by the ICC for war crimes, for which America has sent troops in search of him.

The Syrian Question: Response from R2P and the global Community

Although the crisis in Syria has received remarkable global attention, yet not without knocks and criticisms of R2P for its failure to take decisive actions to halt mass atrocities being committed. The Arab League, EU, the UN including several western democracies disapproved of brutal reaction Syrian government's on the demonstrators, and several others argued in support of the right of demonstrators to exercise of freedom of speech (Agence France-Presse, 2011). Initially, regional actors like the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Arab League were hesitating in their response and the UNSC was not able to agree on the best possible way to halt the crisis. After several months of violence, on 23 February, 2012, UN appointed Kofi Anan as joint special mediator on behalf of Arab league and the UN. He created a six-point proposal which required all parties to be committed and work with the special mediator; an armistice and the ingress to and prompt humanitarian support. Regrettably, the proposal could not stop the crisis which at this time had snowballed into a de facto armed conflict.

The UN Security Council subsequently approved in April 2012, the deployment of a UN supervision mission in Syria (UNSMIS) of 300 weaponless monitors to accelerate the proposal of peace but in June 2013, activities were suspended when the presence of monitors could not stop the crisis. After it became clear as evidence showed, that chemical weapons have been used in Khan Al-Asal 19 March, Saraqib 29 April, Ghouta 21 August; and Jobar 24 August, (ICRTOP, 2013), and America's threat to attack Syria in what President Obama had referred to in 2012 as. "crossing the red line" (Petrasek, 2013), Moscow then demanded that Syria allows global

control of its chemical weapons stockpile (Lavrov, 2013). Moscow and Washington declared in Switzerland capital on September 14, 2013, that both nations have concluded on how Syria should relinquish its chemical weapons (Solomon, 2013). In 2013, Resolution 2118 was adopted by UN Security Council and required that Syria to obliterate its present chemical weapons accumulation and additionally forbids her from deploying, building, amassing and transmitting chemical weapons. This happened to be one, if not the only unanimous resolution so far taken by UNSC on the Syrian conflict. On 14 June, 2012, the UN issued its fifth statement calling on the global community to act decisively to perform its duty to safeguard populations at danger of continuous cruelty and malfeasance throughout Syria, considering the several available means under the charter of UN that includes referral by the UNSC to ICC (ICRTOP, 2013)

Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) became the basic structure for this arrangement and requested for USDI 41b to meet the needs of Syrians facing the consequences of the crisis. In response to the appeal, as at September 18, 2013, the top 10 donors were European Commission, Washington., Kuwait City, England, Berlin, Ottawa, Seoul, Canberra, Riyadh and Copenhagen (UN, 2013), Jerusalem issued some 100 permits for injured Syrian to get medical attention in the country, and established field hospital on its border with Syria (Matt, 2013; Israel2ic, 2013). The earlier hesitation by the League of Arab States (LAS) to act decisively in the crisis was reversed after nine months of attack on citizens. It launched a proposal of peace requesting government to end brutality, free inmates, grant access to media and withdraw army from areas occupied by civilian. When the government reneged in its agreement to sustain the proposal, on November 12 2011, its membership of the league was suspended and on 27th November 2011, economic sanctions imposed. In November 2012, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and LAS acknowledged the national coalition of opposition in Syria as the lawful mouthpiece and principal middleman with GCC and LAS

In May 2011, economic sanctions were foisted by EU including arms embargo, stoppage of visa and freeze of asset against the regime in Syria. It acknowledged In November 2012, the national coalition of opposition in Syria as the lawful mouthpiece of the Syria people and subsequently asked Assad to step aside in order for a political change in January 2013. The foreign ministers across European states in March 2013 altered these sanctions which make it possible for EU to abandon the agreement prohibiting supply to opposition group, of non-lethal weapons. Effectively on May 28, 2013, EU relaxed arms ban on opposition in Syria and announced the possibility of arming antigovernment revolutionaries while championing the arms ban on the Assad's regime (Steible, 2020). UNGA approved a plethora of resolutions demanding the assistance of all parties in an attempt to settle the crisis amicably. In an effort to persuade the UNSC to take action, UNGA in January 2013, asked Ban Ki-Moon, the secretary general of the UN to brief the council. In his presentation, Ban Ki-Moon opined that world leaders must do all they can to reach those in need. They should deploy diplomacy to bring the crisis to an end, tame the fragmentations in Syria, the region and UNSC. UNGA reached a resolution on May 15, 2013, denouncing exacerbation of the crisis, violation of humanitarian law and requested that government meet its duty of safeguarding

population, respect international law and collaborate with the commission of inquiry probing allegations of chemical weapons (ICRTOP, 2013; UNRES, 2013). **What then accounted for factors inhibiting universal unanimous decision on the implementation of R2P in Syria?**

The Libyan experience: Following resolution 1973 of March 7, 2011 invoked on Libya, a coalition of 27 states answered the call of R2P's pillar three to restore the responsibility of sovereignty in Libya, Russia, China, some African states and the BRICS nations have questioned the manner with which that mandate was implemented, as it was not meant for regime change but for the protection of the already ravaged Libyan population. To avoid a repeat of the Libyan experience, Russia and China's continued to veto UN resolutions on Syria. Vitaly Churkin, Russia's UN ambassador, argued, 'the UNSC cannot consider the Syrian situation...The global community was shocked that the NATO definition of the Libyan resolution is a template for future actions of NATO in the implementation of R2P (and) could happen in Syria'. His India counterpart said Libya has given R2P a bad name. (Cinq-Mars, 2011; Petrasek, 2013; Crossley, 2012).

Russia's close ties to the Assad's regime have hampered any resolution taken by the Security Council. A factor that is hinged on political, economic and ideological issues and by extension, Russia's strategic national interest (Cinq-mars, 2011; Petrasek, 2013; Crossley, 2012, Evans, 2012).

The principle of non-interference in the internal affair of other states. This has been Chinese traditional principle, and is devoted to it. This principle is premised on state sovereignty. As quote by an article in Chinese owned media, Xinhua, one basic principle of carter of the UN is non-involvement which included five doctrines of harmonious coexistence. Interference in internal affairs of sovereign nations is antithetical to harmonious resolution of their challenges (Cinq-Mars, 2011; Petrasek, 2013)

Inviolability of National Boundaries: The possibility of capable resistance in case of any foreign involvement in the crisis. The world fears the outcome of such resistance, which might prove to be difficult and bloody. This again raises serious concern; even as the Syrian army announced that if NATO intervenes in the crisis, it will deploy suicide bombing claiming it had made ready 8,000 army officers as well as 13 kamikaze pilots (Mahmood and Booth, 2013).

The fear of Sharianising Syria: The fear is expressed based on the threat by 13 rebel groups that denounced Syrian national council and referred to Sharia law as the only legislative source (Watson, 2013). Similarly, Hezbollah general secretary who claimed that they are fighting alongside the Syrian government in a televised address stated that if Syria falls in the hands of Washington, Israel and Takfiris, citizens of the region will find itself in a dark era (Barnard and Mourtada, 2013, Bassem, 2013)

Lack of Home Support for Military Intervention: For example, the UK parliament (House of Commons) rejected participation in any international response in the form of military strike in Syria, the same position is being held in Germany (Kay, 2013).

The Issue of Budget Reduction: Many countries of the world, especially the West, represented by NATO, has had a massive budget reduction in their military expenditure, a move that is hinged on the global economic crisis. These countries, some of which are willing to take part in any international military response, lack the necessary financial muscle to embark on such military adventure in Syria (Peral, 2011).

United States unilateralism (Peral, 2011): On a good number of occasions, the US has acted with or without UNSC's approval for military response in the internal affairs of other states. America's adoption of unilateralism for several years and a continuous ignoring of the UN civilian arrangements as first among equals... Eric Posner also argued that America has on several occasions disregarded UN regulations- Grenada, Kosovo, Libya (where it obtained the authority to halt civilian bloodbath but breached the agreement by pursuing regime change), Panama, Second Iraq war and Vietnam. U.S has also intervened in Cuba in 1961, Somalia in 1992/1993, Nicaragua, etc. This explains why countries look at the supposed U.S. assistance with suspicion and disdain, especially when it comes to where her interest lies, thus Posner (2013) asked, which nation will you not find America or its property that requires protection?"

Implication of Global Inaction on the Syria Crisis

The number of deaths and displaced persons, including human right violations since the conflict began in Syria in March 2011, cannot be qualified. It is disservice committed against the people of Syria by the comity of nations for its failure to act decisively and promptly to end the conflict. The actual number of deaths has been in conflict but the estimate according to sources, ranges from between 580,000-700,000 as of March 2024 (Farge, 2022; SOHR, 2024). The conflict has caused many to leave their homes to neighbouring countries for shelter and protection. As at 2023, 16.7 million needs humanitarian assistance while 7.2 million are internally displaced (UNHCR, 2023). Government and revolutionists are guilty of the enormous human rights violation being committed even though that of the government is higher both in gravity and scale. There have been nine intentional mass killings, with eight being perpetuated by government and one by the rebels, according to the UN Commission investigating human rights violation (Heilprin, 2013). Crime wave has considerably increased as criminals' loot houses and stores, as well as increased in rate of kidnappings, car stealing, rape, sexual assault and bombings (Damein, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

When the Arab spring began, it was not likely to continue unabated because one of the major demands of protesters was democratic reforms aimed at ending sit-tightism across the region. In Tunisia where it all started, the president, realizing he has lost the legitimacy to govern, fled the country with his family few days into the crisis. This explains the rationale for the peace presently enjoyed in the country after the protest, though there are still minor skirmishes. However, the initial resistance by Mubarak, and the total rejection of protesters demand by Gaddafi and Assad led to the unending crisis and insecurity in Egypt, Libya and Syria, respectively.

The atrocities being committed in Syria presently should be blamed on both Assad and the opposition/rebels. While Assad's decision to hold on to power may have resulted in the crisis, the opposition, did not fare better, hence large scale deaths and several individuals dislodged from their homes, though the Assad led government has never agreed that Syria has people that are displaced internally, but have argued that, 'some individuals are suffering from several onslaughts by insurgents (Lehmann, 2013).

The international community shares in this blame for their failure to implement R2P for the sake of innocent civilians who bears the brunt of Assad's tyranny and opposition recklessness. The crisis has gone beyond imagination. There was an incident in which a rebel leader Khalid al Hamad, of Farooq al-Mustakilla Brigade, with an alias, Abu Sakkar, consumed a dead army officer's liver and heart and declared, 'you Bashar army, you dogs, I swear to god, we shall consume your livers and hearts; O Bab Amr champion, you butcher the Alawites, extract their hearts and consume them (Peter, 2013).

This has great implication for religious tolerance in the region. This is why the world should have acted when it became clear that Assad and the opposition were committing crimes against humanity. Will Syria ever be the same again, whether in political or religious matters? especially now that its economy has taken a down turn. It has shrunk by 45%, unemployment risen five-fold, currency decrease by 6% of its value before the war and public sector losing \$15b (Almonitor, 2013). Irrespective of which side eventually wins the ongoing war, the divisions that emerged along religious, ethnic and political lines during the conflict cannot be healed soonest, no matter how the crisis come to an end. The decision, based on economic and ideological interest by Russia and china not to intervene has been blamed by many for the failure of R2P in the conflict. The Western members of the UNSC also have share of the blame because of the division among themselves. Now that international law and morality has failed to prevent human right abuses and protect victims of abuse in Syria, it is now time for the global community to act, otherwise this inaction will affect the future decisions of the security council on the application of R2P when the need arise elsewhere and anytime.

Conflict of Interest

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