



**United Nations' failure to preserve the lives of
Syrians.**

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Introduction

According to Bercovitch (1991 pp7-17), mediation occurs when disputing parties allow the assistance of a foreign entity to mediate their disputes without resorting to physical violence or the use of power. Usually, it is the United Nation's (UN) role to mediate conflicts all across the world. The UN estimates that more than 13.4 million people in Syria need aid right now as a result of the deadly conflict, at least 5.5 million of them are children. Most of these people are unable to support themselves and do not receive any aid from other countries or international organisations.

The main aim of this research is to reveal the true causes of the UN's failure in mediating the conflict in Syria. Another aim is to examine that, why none of the Security Council's (SC) measures are meant to affect the political regime in Syria or its sovereignty. As a result of avoiding touching the Syrian regime's sovereignty, the UN spends more than \$330 million annually to preserve the lifeline through the Turkish Syrian borders, which allows them to help the Syrian individuals with food, clothing and other essentials. (UNHCR, 2022). The researcher will start this study by explaining the internal composition of Syrian society as well as some background to the war. After that, this study will explain what were the issues that prevented the SC from taking measures to end the conflict, then this study will look specifically at the Track One Diplomacy theory, which gives a very valid explanation of the failure of the UN's intervention. Moreover, the study will consider the concept of the good time of intervention by Kleiboer (1996), which claims that the UN could succeed only if it intervened in the first two years of the conflict.

This study is significantly important for many reasons firstly, through it, people would understand the reason that why, after 12 years of killing, there is no solution to the conflict yet. Despite numerous reports of the suffering of the populace as well as tens of discussion sessions in the SC, the UN has done little to defend the Syrian from the Syrian regime's as well as Russian attacks. Secondly, it is significant for me personally as I can show the world what was really happening in my country Syria and how complicated is the Syrian crisis. As I am aware of the conditions of individuals who are suffering as a result of the atrocities of war. I know that because I was one of them and experienced the life that they are living, and I witnessed the horrible war. Thirdly, the question of this study has always piqued my interest, I sought answers through a variety of academic resources to gain a better understanding of the potential actions that the UN can take in the case of Syria and similar cases. However, there are a kind of limited discussions and a gap regarding this topic; as a result, I am attempting to fill this gap through my research. I am trying to figure out what are the real obstacles that the UN is facing in mediating the conflict and find answers to my questions. With the aim that my research would persuade other scholars to shed light on these cases and

pay greater attention to them. Furthermore, my research will assist other people, who are undertaking research similar to my research or seeking answers to questions similar to mine, by providing them with material that could help them to begin their research or gain a better understanding of the topic.

This research will explore Russia's role in Syria as it is the first financial, diplomatic, and military supporter of Syria's regime, while at the same time it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Allison 2013, Pp 798-802). It is attempting to utilize its capacity to influence the decision to meet its own interest, which is evident through utilizing 17 vetoes against the UN's resolutions whenever Syria was in the negotiations (GOV.UK. 2022).

Background to the topic

To understand the situation in Syria we need to look at the domestic configuration of the state. Considering the incompatibility of the Assad family and their Alawite ancestry in a predominantly Sunni country, the military apparatus backed the Assad family's ascendancy to the government. However, even maintaining a monopoly on force proved insufficient as a safeguard for the Assad regime's existence. The process of attempting to topple the Assad administration and its governing party was sparked by the widely held objective of bringing the nation into a democratic state. Top Syrian authorities, notably Assad, have a high level of unpopularity that manifests in political vulnerabilities and brutality against people. These elements combined to create a picture of complexity and instability, which resulted in a civil war after the start of the revolution on the 15 of March 2011 (Hall 2013). One of the primary causes of the emergence of an internal war in Syria, in addition to the terrible socioeconomic conditions seen there, is the society's ethnic and religious diversity, which is clearly at odds with one another. When Assad came to power in 2000, the majority of the religious group in Syria was the Sunnis, who made up about 70 percent of the nation's population. The next largest religious group was the Alawites, who made up 11.3%. Christians, Druze, and Shiites, who made up 11.2 percent, 3.2 percent, and 3.2 percent of the population, respectively, comprise the remaining demography. The Kurds, Armenians, and Palestinian refugees are only a few of the important ethnic minorities that exist at the heart of Syrian society (Hussain I, no date, Pp 5-25). It is obvious that the demographics of Syria have accentuated issues of disagreement, making it impossible to satisfy the goals and interests of such different groups while maintaining togetherness in an environment that encourages division.

This divisions led infuriated locals came to the streets to protest for political and economic reforms in 2011 after a group of kids was detained and subjected to torture by the government for spray-painting antiregime graffiti. Security forces reacted violently, making several arrests and even opening fire on protesters. Similar non-violent rallies started to develop in cities all throughout the nation within a few weeks as a result of the regime's harsh response, which gave the protesters more awareness and momentum against the regime. Videos of security officers assaulting and shooting at protesters were leaked to international media sources and spread around the nation (Zuber, Marian & Moussa, Samuel 2018, Pp 248-249). The regime used more force in its response as the protests grew stronger and more widespread. In some instances, this required surrounding protest-heavy cities or

neighbourhoods, like Baniyas or Homs, with tanks, artillery, and assault helicopters while also shutting off communications and utilities. As a result, some protester groups started to use force against security personnel. When Syrian troops and tanks entered the northern town of Jisr al-Shugr in June 2011, a wave of refugees fled into Turkey, while others were forced to defend themselves and engage in combat against the Syrian army. This in turn caused the conflict between the demonstrators and the soldiers to escalate worse and led to the civil war (Khan, H & Khan, W. 2017 Pp591-601).

Reasons for UN failure in Syria

As a result of the above-mentioned, the UN was the only institution that could influence the conflict, however, the process of mediation did not run smoothly, as the belligerents did not show any interest in the mediation. Furthermore, not only the belligerents were fighting in a war on the ground, but there was also another war taking place in the security council between the member states, as they were not agreeing on a resolution that they could work according to. One factor supporting the Security Council's lack of response to the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria is its particular structure, which indicates highly hierarchical and legalistic elements like the presence of permanent members in the council and the potential for these actors to influence the decision-making. The dynamics and structure of the body prevent any resolution from being signed in the context of these discussions as long as the agreed-upon content conflicts with the outside agendas of these actors. This is because the relevant powers in the area of international security are given the ability to exercise their veto power during the Council's discussions. In this regard, the institution's performance in addressing the Syrian crisis is insufficient to succeed. For instance, there was rivalry and mistrust within the Council. Russia and China did not trust the P3 states, which are the UK, France, and the US, and they always believed that the P3 would restrict Russian interest in Syria if they played a substantial role in the mediation. As a result, Russia and China were attempting to obstruct any potential involvement by the P3 in mediating the Syrian conflict, which they believed to be exclusively their responsibility (Wishnick E 2009, Pp 1-20).

The UN was not only the institution that is capable to resolve the war, but rather had an official responsibility to take appropriate measures. Since the 2005 approval of the UN world summit outcome document, the responsibility to protect (R2P) populations against genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing has become a crucial worldwide concept, which must be conducted by the UN. Three fundamental pillars of responsibility are outlined by R2P, as follows: (1) "Every state has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing". (2) "The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility". (3) "If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter" (Fabijanić S, 2014, pp 61-74). This is where Syria fits in the R2P as the Syrian regime not

only did not protect the Syrian people but rather it was the one that committed crimes against humanity as well as they resorted to ethnic cleansing. The security barriers belonging to the Syrian regime were executing people only because their card identity stated that they are from Idlib or Daraa, as they are two Syrian cities where the majority of their people are Sunni and against Assad. Having lived in Syria I have experienced and witnessed that in my own eyes. In 2013 an individual was detained at one of the army's checkpoints as I was fleeing the state, after he was taken away, he never returned to his family back. This that was only because he belongs to Idlib. The Syrian regime appears to believe it a that when they kill a sizable number of oppositions, they would restrict the progress of the revolution. However, each murder was encouraging a hundred if not a thousand to rise up to protest for their rights and liberty.

In an attempt by the UN to grant people their liberty and fill its responsibility, there were two Security Council resolution draughts being discussed in August and September 2011, one was written by the UK, the other by Russia. During the early stages of the discussions, the UK draught contained an asset freeze on important members of the Syrian Government and an arms embargo, but this provision was later withdrawn due to concerns from Russia and China. A threat of sanctions was not included in the Russian version, which urged the Syrian government to carry out the changes it had pledged. Additionally, these rival proposals used various framing strategies, with Russia describing the war in terms that were similar to those used by the Syrian regime. Such as “the revolution is a foreign conspiracy against the Syrian state” (The Guardian, 2022). There were differences of opinion obvious over how to assess the reality in Syria and the appropriate course of action. The UK's plan, which had more approval than the Russian draught, was placed to a vote on October 4, 2011, in the Security Council. Russia specifically saw this increased support to the UK's draft as a danger to its interest in Syria, which ultimately led to a veto by both Russia and China, along with abstentions from Lebanon, Brazil, India, and South Africa. The remaining nine members voted in favour. This proposal, if it had been approved, would have denounced violence against people, backed a Syrian-led democratic process, reaffirmed the Syrian Government's duty to protect, and warned that sanctions may be considered after 30 days. The opposition, represented by Russia and China, notably were not happy with the inclusion of penalties. Clearly, they sought an explicit phrase putting Russia on the safe side and stressing that military involvement would never be launched in Syria. Russia also expressed gratitude to Brazil, India, China, and South Africa for backing the opposing UK's draft, this shows the disagreements between the two sides among the Security Council members and was warning that the Syrian issue is not easy to solve rather the war would go on (Gifkins J, 2012. Pp 1-20).

On August 18, 2011, remarks by the presidents of the US and Canada, as well as the UK, France, and Germany, all urging Assad to step down, changed the diplomatic landscape (CNN 2011). These assertions stressed that Assad had lost his legitimacy as the leader due to state-sponsored atrocities against civilians. The ensuing international discussion in Syria has been greatly affected by this important diplomatic effort. For instance, the Russian ambassador said that the P3's vocal calls for political transition damaged any chance of a peaceful resolution while defending their veto in February 2012. They argued that the resolution may be a part of a covert plan to enact political change, which has been some

ambassadors' expressly declared goal. Russia was only condemning the west statements against the Syrian regime in order to have excuse to interfere in the state in a legitimate manner and be able to practice its armed capacity in order to overcome the armed opposition and take over the control of the whole state. It is worth mentioning that, intervening in Syria is fairly easy for Russia as it has a military port in Tartus, a Syrian city at the Mediterranean Sea (Phillips, C. 2016. Pp 59-82).

The UN SC only discussed the Syrian issue 22 times and adopted over 27 resolutions in 2020, yet they had little overall influence on the lives of Syrians. Russia used its veto every time it had the chance, such as the vetoes on 4 February 2012, 19 July 2012, 22 May 2014, and 8 October 2016 among many other occasions (Security Council 2022 Pp 2-21). The US representative referred to these vetoes as a vile act since they caused dissatisfaction and rage in the council. Strong worldwide condemnation of the vetoes followed. In a break from precedent, the UK specifically mentioned Russia and China in its statement following the 2012 vote, expressing outrage at their decision to veto and stating that, Russia and China had failed to fulfil their obligations as permanent members of the Security Council. Furthermore, the vetoed resolutions by Russia, according to Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, gave the Syrian dictatorship more power and caused the bloodshed to worsen. These statements by key figures of the council demonstrate the division that was taking place within the security council, which was reflected on the ground in Syria. The consensus was so far from the negotiation table in the Council, as it could be seen that the two camps were gathering member states around them, in order to strengthen their position. This division led to worsening the war on the ground, when the belligerents saw that they receive diplomatic support from the superpower such as Russia backed by China and the US backed by the UK, believed that those states will never let them down, and they would grant them the victory at the end. When the fighters on the ground saw that they are backed by foreign powers, that boosted their spirits and led to more horrific war, and in turn more death (Gifkins J, 2012. Pp 1-20).

These divisions in the Security Council are explained by a few different causes. First, as the conflict in Syria grew worse with NATO's operation in Libya, several Security Council members began to worry that a resolution on Syria may be a precursor to a more forceful military action and a prospect of a regime change. The situation in Libya in 2011 was unsatisfactory; since NATO assassinated Gaddafi, there has been no stability in the nation. Russia made this clear after it vetoed the initial draught of a resolution on Syria; they stated that their suggestions for phrasing the rejection of foreign military involvement in Libya were ignored, and given the events in Libya, it can only make them wary about Syria. The Syrian crisis could not be examined in the Council independently of the Libyan experience, according to Russia (Ndidi C, Pp 100-109).

This division in the security council which was reflected on the ground made it ever harder for superpowers to control the war as each ideological camp was supporting a military group on the ground. As a result, there was no political pressure on the military groups to push toward peace. To understand that better we need to look at the Track one Diplomacy (ToD) theory which is referred to the official manner that diplomats utilise to ease conflicts. Sending communications or applying pressure from one nation or international organisation directly to

another's governing body is known as track-one diplomacy or official governmental diplomacy. Track 1 (T1) is conducted by senior officials of a state or state-like authority and entails communication with other states or state-like authorities. These officials may include heads of state, delegations from the state department or the foreign affairs ministry, representatives from other governmental departments and ministries, or commanders of a military branch with influence and power in the area of the conflict. The unofficial connections that may include mediators, regular people, or companies can be distinguished from these official diplomatic activities. Such unofficial discussions are described as track-two diplomacy. Easing conflicts accomplishes through three different stages, the focus in this research will be on T1 which is the diplomat's direct effort to solve the Syrian conflict, as it is our concern in this research (Bohmelt, 2010 Pp 169-172). This theory is especially significant for the topic of this study because it focuses on interactions between official actors in the international political system and the official mediation of disputes that can be provided by another state or an international organisation, which is the subject of this research. According to T1, in order for UN diplomats to successfully mediate the Syrian war, they will need security and logistical support as well as the authority and capacity to exert pressure on all belligerent factions; typically, the council's consensus will offer these qualities. T1 is based on the notion that the UN diplomats should work alongside peacekeepers who are on the ground to find a way to coerce or entice belligerents to subject to diplomats' solutions (Mapendere, 2005 Pp 67). An example of that could be the Indian-Pakistani war in 1965, because of the council's consensus, the UN was able to place a military ban on both nations and impose a truce. In the end, belligerents grew more willing to negotiate the crisis's future and reached a solution (Bohmelt, 2010 Pp170). However, this is not the case in Syria, as each ideological camp forbids the other from applying pressure on the party that they believe will boost the realization of their agenda.

The endeavour by each ideological camp to its interest was pushing the end of the war to the unknown, when the war did not end in the first few months the chance of ending the conflict was getting harder. Another compelling explanation for why the UN's intervention in Syria failed exists. For instance, the appropriate window of opportunity for diplomatic intervention gives a very valid explanation. This theory appears to be quite plausible since it provides explanations for why conflict mediation efforts in many other places, such as Somalia and Palestine, have been unsuccessful. It is presupposed that diplomats would fail to successfully resolve a dispute at an unplanned moment. On the other hand, they would be successful if they mediated at the right moment. Kleiboer (1996, pp362-363) stated that disputes go through a variety of time periods. In certain times of the war age, belligerents are more receptive to diplomats' interventions. Because the casualty toll is still manageable. At some point, the views of the belligerents soften, and this is the time when the diplomat's efforts could be successful. On the one hand, if the UN tries to terminate the fight early on, they will not find a solution since the belligerents have sufficient strength and have extremely high expectations for how the conflict will turn out. On the other hand, when diplomats intercede at a late date, as in the case of Syria, a resolution is unattainable since the parties to the conflict have already suffered significant losses. They want to use all available means to win the war as a consequence. There is a minimum and maximum time limit necessary for mediation to be successful, according to research by Bercovitch for 257 disputes. The most

effective mediation attempts were those that were started between 12 and 36 months (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, and Wille 1991, p22). Any UN diplomatic mediation that occurs before 12 months or after 36 months has a significant chance of failing (Kleiboer 1996, p363). That is evident in the example of Syria. After two or three years of the conflict it became impossible to end the conflict by the SC as the member states could not control the war in the ground as they did at the first few months, they only had the option that they let the war go, as the Council's permanent members are not the ones that lose lives in all events.

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Second, Syria is a top imperative for Russia. The Tartus naval port in Syria is the only active Russian military installation outside the former USSR. The Tartus port in Syria has a Russian naval supply and maintenance station, allowing Russian warships to refuel in the Mediterranean without returning to their Black Sea ports. The station was built in 1971 to aid the USSR Mediterranean unit's activities, and after the USSR was disbanded in 1991, it was occasionally used to refuel warships. If Russia lost this naval port, they would lose influence in the whole region (Bagdonas A, 2022, Pp 58-60, 63-64).

Thirdly, Russia has goals in the Syrian crisis that are related to its strategic interests. Russia believes that it is significantly big state, and its concerns and interests must be addressed or at least taken into consideration in the global system. It appears that Russia is attempting to re-establish its position as an international hegemon. That is clear from its foreign policy. According to Mearsheimer (2014), Russia is striving to use whatever opportunity it can to expand its boundaries, regardless of whether the neighbouring countries actually pose a danger or Russia believes it gains diplomatic interest through these states. This is demonstrated by the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the more recent Ukrainian invasion in 2022. Or even by actively promoting political regimes such as Syria in order to gain control of as much territory as possible. This necessarily entails a check on American global hegemony, most notably in the form of opposition to attempts to use or circumvent the Security Council. Additionally, Russia does not wish to legitimise the regime-change concept since this may serve as a model for unfavourable events in areas that are more important to Russia, which may extend to Russia itself. The destruction of Russia's final bastions in this strategically important region may be at risk in Syria and, and in the wider scale, in the entire region. The war in Syria, in terms of strategic interest to Russia could be said that it is a result of an attempt to secure themselves while expanding their position in the international political order (Ahmed Z, 2018 Pp 39-45).

To establish itself as a hegemon state and maintain its interest Russia committed these atrocities in Syria, they have the prospect of killing every single one who opposes Assad and threaten their interest. In just the first three years of combat, more than 45,000 Russian airstrikes were authorized, much of which targeted infrastructure and civil targets. According to Airwars, more than 24,000 non-combatants have been killed and more than 41,000 have been wounded. To stress this point well, all those casualties and harm were only in three years of the Russian involvement in Syria (Airwars, 2022). It is crucial to note that those individuals' deaths have been confirmed along with names and identities. Many more thousands of people were killed, and they are still listed as missing, their families have no way of knowing if they are alive or dead, because their dead corpses were completely incinerated beneath the heinous Russian bombardment.

Conclusion

To sum up everything has been stated so far, it is particularly challenging to build an international agreement in relation to Syria because of the region's unstable politics and the conflicting interests of the international powers. By examining the true causes of the UN's failure in mediating the conflict in Syria, the research reveals that all the SC's permanent members with no exception are the ones that are responsible for the bloodshed. All of them were chasing their own interest, but none of them was willing to prioritise the lives of people. However, in particular, Russia is the main responsible for the death of millions of Syrians. As it is the main diplomatic and financial supporter of the Syrian regime and at the same time it is a permanent member of the SC it was obstructing any resolutions or agreements that affect the Assad regime in order to maintain its interest. The P3 was not trusted by Russia because it

always thought that if they played a significant part in the mediation, they would limit Russian involvement in Syria. Even though, remarks by the presidents of the US and Canada, as well as the UK, France, and Germany, all urged Assad to step down. Despite the US calling Russia's vetoes a despicable act, the UK described Russia as having violated its duty as a permanent member of the Security Council. Additionally, Russia's vetoes increased the strength of the Syrian dictatorship and made the slaughter worse, all of which had little effect on the overall situation in Syria. Russia even countered that any hope of a peaceful conclusion was harmed by the P3's outspoken calls for political transformation. According to this study, the reason for the Russian support for the Syrian regime is that Russia has financial interests in Syria as discussed above.

This study asserts that Russia would not give up these profits easily and is instead exerting all of its efforts to exterminate the Syrian opposition from the ground and benefit from the state further. More crucially, it has strategic interests, like those of the sole operational Russian military facility outside the former USSR, the Tartus naval port in Syria. Russia would lose power in the whole region if it lost control of this naval port. According to this study, a consensus was not found, and the UN failed because Russia was abstracting the UN's effort in mediating the conflict. It did not want an end to the conflict, and it was preoccupied with bombarding the houses of civilians in an attempt to prevent the opposition from toppling the Assad regime. While the West, in turn, did not prohibit Russia, rather they let it intensify its efforts in an attempt to exhaust it in the Syrian war. As if Syria was a desolate place with no inhabitants, where the West was permissible to drain Russia of its resources.

Regrettably, the Syrian case would further tarnish the UN's reputation and the hopes of those who want to see it take an active part in safeguarding human rights. In order for the UN to become active in the international system again, it has to change its policy towards Syria. For example, the SC permanent members should perceive Syria differently, for instance, they should not look at it in terms of national interest but rather as a state that there are human beings deserve to live safely in. Russia must halt stepping up its military presence in the state, and the West in turn must stop depleting Russia in Syria. More pressingly, the P3 should disregard the vetoes by Russia in the SC and collaborate with NATO to establish a no-fly zone, impose a military embargo on Syrian territory, and send peacekeeping missions to maintain stability and stop Russia and the Assad from committing further crimes against humanity. The UN should also enable conversation amongst just Syrians from all religious backgrounds, including Kurds, Druze, and others, as an international organisation rather than as governments acting in the name of the UN. International powers should refrain from participating in the conversation and should merely observe it. However, the UN should ensure that Assad is not involved in Syria's future since his presence will make it impossible to have productive talks. More than half of the Syrian population returning home if Assad remains in power seems improbable given that he is the same person they fled from. The UN must concentrate on Syria's economic crisis when the situation begins to improve and the firing stops. In order to persuade the belligerent parties to settle down and prevent any future clashes amongst the former belligerents, the UN must begin rehabilitation projects with the assistance of Syrians.

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