

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Syrian Civil War was a war that left hundreds of thousands death and half of the country's population displaced, destroying the country and forcing the involvement of global forces. Dreams and hopes remain among the rubble of the ruins after eight years of the Syrian war. The Syrian war was complicated, so it seemed impossible to count the number of Syrians killed by human rights groups. This conflict did not seem to indicate its intention to reach negotiations and agreements or at least experience de-escalation.

The victims of the Syrian Civil War were no longer a secret. The total number of deaths due to the Syrian Civil War exceeds 500,000 fatalities. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), in Syria, reported 2017 death tolls. 10,204 civilians, 2,298 children and 1,536 women were killed. (Ghany, 2019)

Moreover, foreign involvement in the Syrian Civil War referred to political, military and operational support to Syrian conflict parties and active foreign involvement. Most parties involved in the Syrian war were supported by different kinds of foreign countries and non-Syrian entities. One of them was the United States' intervention in the Syrian Civil War.

Meanwhile, the diplomatic cables of the United States that were leaked by WikiLeaks showed that regime change could have been the United States government's covert foreign policy goal during the period before the civil war, even when President Barack Obama was engaged in a public relations with Syria's

Bashar al-Assad. In 2011, Barack Obama stated in his speech that the Syrian Government must stop the shooting of civilians and unjust arrests, free political prisoners, and allow human rights monitors to have access to cities like Dara'a. As a third-party interference abroad in responding to the humanitarian crisis, the United States argued that the purpose of the intervention was to protect victims of human rights violations. (Myres, 2011)

The United States which was traumatized by Iraq and Afghanistan was determined to take extra care in any future military intervention. It was a matter of great caution that the West has shown. Military intervention by the United States has occurred in various ways. On the other hand, a country that was pro with the Assad Government planned to provide weapons and military to the Assad regime in the form of sophisticated land-to-air missiles.

Obama tried to restore strategic solvency, which he thought would be the most efficient American intervention in the arena. The audacity of Obama's commitment to change was rather new ways of foreign policy thought. During a democratic primary debate in January 2008, he said that he did not just want to stop the war, but he wanted to end the mindset that causes war in the first place. About fifteen months later in Prague, Obama declared America's commitment to seeking peace and security in the nuclear-free globe.

However, in solving the crisis in Syria, America itself experienced many dilemmas. In his response, Foreign Minister John Kerry said that the decision taken by the opposition National Coalition was a big step. This war occurred in a portion of the world responsible for the production of energy, so it could

have financial consequences and involve the entire energy industry in the Middle East. This was able to double petroleum prices worldwide and reduce the US GDP by between 3% and 5%. (Lopez, 2015)

Also, the Arab League was an organization established to maintain the sovereignty of each of its member countries. However, the achievements of the Arab League in conflict resolution in the form of the civil war were generally disappointing. This organization was originally established to maintain the sovereignty of each of its member countries. However, so far, the Arab League had only mediated 5 of the 22 major civil wars that occurred in the region since 1945. This failure usually occurs due to the inefficiency of the organization in decision making.

While the International Criminal Court (ICC), because the ICC was not a party to the Rome Statute, they have restricted authority in Syria. A referral to the UN Security Council was the only other method through which the ICC can investigate supposed offenses committed in Syria. (Killingsworth, 2019)

The United Nations through the United Nations Security Council had the policy of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), which became a common ground by UN member states. The Responsibility to Protect was a worldwide political commitment endorsing the four main issues in the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity by all the members of this World Summit in 2005. If a country fails to protect its population from threats of crimes against humanity on a massive scale such as war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, through the United Nations Security Council, the international

community including countries can act jointly to protect the population of the country. (Orford, 2011)

Initially, the United States did not intervene directly in Syria, the CIA had supplied non-lethal assistance only to certain Syrian Army rebel groups, but later, the elected rebel commander received training, finance, and intelligence. However, at that time there were fatal attacks during the war, namely the Ghouta attack in Damascus in August 2013, and the Khan Al-Assal attack in Aleppo in March 2013. Due to the large arsenal of such weapons, the Syrian Baathist military was seen as the main suspect. The United States and the UNHRC Investigation Commission were carrying out a joint fact-finding mission in the chemical weapons attack. In 2013, when the Syrian Government used chemical weapons in its actions against civilians, for the first time the United States intervened directly in Syria.

As human rights, violation with the use of chemical weapons in the community in Syria, the United States was motivated to carry out humanitarian intervention by a sense of obligation. But, RtoP and certain implementations of it have come under criticism by some states and individuals during this decade.

Talking a little about one of the implementations of the '*Responsibility to Protect*' from the United States against Syrian Government is Turkey's policy on the repatriation of Syrian refugees to return to their respective countries in an orderly manner by the article 33 of the UNHCR convention related to the case of the Syrian Civil war. Article 33 was about the prohibition of expulsion or return ('refoulement').

In this policy, Turkey created a "safe zone" for refugees from Syria which assisted by the American

Government with the agreement of both parties and the Assad Government. The United States was helping by giving a donation to the Turkish Government to control refugees from Syria. Turkey and the United States will immediately establish a Joint Operations Centre in Turkey for the coordination and management of a planned safe zone in northern Syria. Also, the United States and Turkey launch joint patrols in planned Syria “safe zone”.

In practice, based on data from the International Coalition for Responsibility to Protect, RtoP was used as a basis for resolving mass atrocity crimes cases. For example, in Libya, Rwanda, Central Africa, and now the Syrian Civil War. However, in the case of the Syrian Civil War since 2011, the implementation of the RtoP to protect civilians in Syria was ineffective because the conflict did not end.

In the Washington Think Tank, Anthony Cordesman, a national security and defense expert in Syria said that American intervention in Syria ended in near-full failure. The death toll from the unresolved civil war in Syria is on the rise which displacing millions of refugees. Cordesman said that the United States never had a definite plan for Syria, both said they wanted Assad to resign but did not aggressively pursue that goal. (Cordesman, U.S Forces in the Middle East: Resources and Capabilities, 2019) Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C said:

“The biggest winners are going to be Iran, ISIS (and) Assad. The biggest losers are going to be the people of Syria, eventually Americans if ISIS comes back ... our allies”. (Al-Baidhani, 2015)

And Barack Obama on his speech stated:

“..... *For years, we’ve worked to stop the civil war in Syria and alleviate human suffering. It has been one of the hardest issues that I’ve faced as president.*” (POLITICO, 2016)

This statement confirmed that the implementation of the *Responsibility to Protect* from the United Nations to the United States has failed. The United States was regarded to have not completely conducted humanitarian intervention and the UN was unable to meet its responsibilities based on the *'Responsibility to Protect'* policy. One thing that can be agreed by conservatives, liberals, and centrists about United States intervention that can make Syria's civil war worse, not even better.

Based on the explanation above, it is interesting to discuss when Responsibility to Protect cannot be implemented in Syria. RtoP is often used as a preference and involved in resolving humanitarian conflicts in several other countries, but why the Syrian Civil War occurred almost 9 years has not ended yet. This phenomenon becomes interesting as a basis for analyzing the failure in implementing the *'Responsibility to Protect'* in the Syrian Civil War by the United States.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

From the background described, the writer found a problem. Therefore, this study seeks and hopes to answer the question below:

What were the factors that caused the United States’ failure in implementing *'Responsibility to Protect'* in the Syrian Civil War during Barack Obama’s era?

C. RESEARCH PURPOSE

The research purpose in this thesis was to explain the United States' failure in implementing 'Responsibility to Protect' in the Syrian Civil War.

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING THEORY

Bojang AS was defining a foreign policy as a government's strategy in dealing with other countries or actors using strategies and ideas (diplomatic tactics and coercion), and the available resources at the state's disposable, such as economic and military. (AS, 2018) A state was the foreign policy decision-makers. In terms of enforcing their policies, changes in the situation and environment both domestically and internationally have a significant impact on decision-makers.

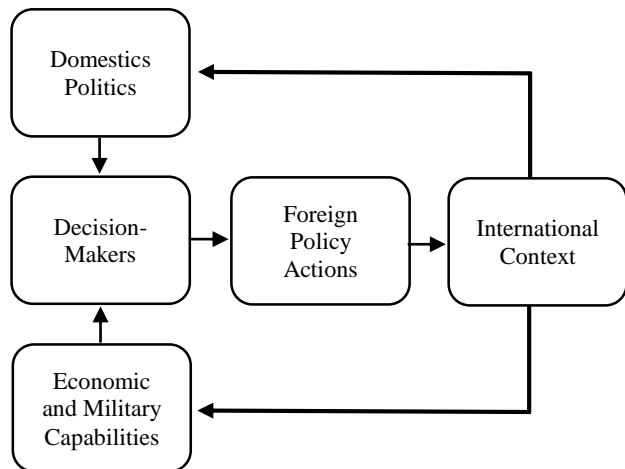
Raymond F. Hopkins said that the formation of a country's foreign policy was determined by factors, including rationality, perception, interpretation and definition of the situation, and time in making decisions. Rationality was related to optimizing results. Perception was the awareness of state actors towards events and demands that need to be responded to. Time in decision-making, when the actors were required to be quick and precise in making decisions before the situation gets out of control. (Hopkins & Mansbach, 1973) The dynamics of perceptions that accumulate as a decision, Barack Obama as a '*stakeholder*' was influenced by domestic and international factors. The Foreign Policy

Decision-Making theory by William D. Coplin stated:

“To be interested in why states behave as they do interest area, we have to be interested in why their leaders make the decision... On the contrary, any given foreign policy action may be viewed as the result of three board categories of consideration affecting the foreign policy decision-makers state. The first is domestic politics within the foreign policy decision-makers state. The second is the economy and military capability of the state. The third is the international context the particular position in which his state finds itself especially in relation to other state in system.” (Coplin W. d., 1971)

To learn the foreign policy decision-making process theory in more detail, William de Coplin explained it through the following chart.

Figure 1.1
Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process



Source: William D. Coplin. (1971). *Introduction to International Politics: A Theoretical Overview*. Markham Publisher Co. New York, p. 30.

a) *Domestic Politics*

Zaara Zain Hussain, as a researcher and policy analyst at a government-sponsored think tank under the National University of Singapore said that domestic politics had a big impact on foreign policy decision-making. (Hussain, 2011)

The government decided and played the concept of national interest, composed strategies, and made decisions or even evaluated decisions that have already been implemented. The political condition of a country largely determined the foreign policy made by a country's decision-makers. In the case of several countries, the country's leader such as President, Prime Minister, or King played a dominant role in the decision-making process. (Coplin W. D., 2003) In this case, Barack Obama was played dominant role in the foreign policy decision-making process as a '*decision-maker*'.

However, to improve strategy, a decision-maker needs support from policy influencer or lawmakers. According to William D. Coplin, there are four types of policy influencer, those types are: 1) *Bureaucratic Influencer*; 2) *Partisan Influencer*; 3) *Interest Influencer*; and 4) *Mass Influencer*. (Coplin W. d., 1971)

Bureaucratic influencers had a major influence on foreign policy decision-making. Members of the bureaucracy were individuals or organizations in government institutions that assisted in the foreign policy decision-making

process and sometimes became decision-makers. *Partisan influencers* in foreign policy decision-making are political parties in a democratic system. They are a group who tried to realize the demands of society by suppressing the authorities related to the policy. *Interest influencers* were individuals or groups who had the same interests. The method used to form support on their interests were writing letters, promising financial or threatening support, not only for decision-makers, but for bureaucratic influencers, and partisan influencers. If they did not play a role in foreign policy decision-making, they tended to criticize foreign policy decision-makers. *Mass influencers* were public opinions formed by the mass media. (Coplin W. D., 2003)

Basically, through foreign policy-decision making process, one of the factors of the United States' failure in implementing '*Responsibility to Protect*' in Syria was the domestic political conditions in the United States. One of these factors can be seen from the three policy influencers, such as the United States Congress as *bureaucratic influencers*, Democratic and Republican Party as *partisan influencers*, and public opinion as *mass influencers*. These three policy influencers greatly affected Barack Obama as a decision-maker to make foreign policy. In the end, the policies drawn up by Congress under Barack Obama's authority will affect America's international credibility.

b) Economic and Military Capabilities

Economic and military capabilities were one of the key factors in the foreign policy decision-making process. Economic and military capabilities were reflected by the financial power of the state. Analysis of the economic growth, a country's welfare, and the level of wealth that could fulfil the needs of the people were an assessment of a country's economic capability. Also, the government should have compared their economic capability with other countries.

The United States was one of the most developed countries that have the economic capacity in the industry and advanced military capabilities. Also, the economic capacity of the United States would have an impact on military capacity. However, the United States also had very high expenditures and debt. Therefore, it would have an impact on the stability of the United States' economy. Even though one of the major factors in development was the economic and military capabilities, it might also destroy the country. (Ochmanek & Peter A. Wilson, 2017)

Economy and military were two inseparable things to achieve national interests. Barack Obama was feeling a dilemma to make a decision when his country should take risks in the economy and sending military troops to Syria. In fact, the United States has armed and trained insurgents who have spent \$500 million per year. (The Guardian, 2015) This has created controversy for Congress and the public.

c) *International Context*

International context is the relevant influence of other countries related to the issue. According to William D. Coplin, the International context also influences foreign policy decision-making which is considered in the country. The combination of the International Context aspect and country relations defined on how the country responds to some international issues. Coplin stated:

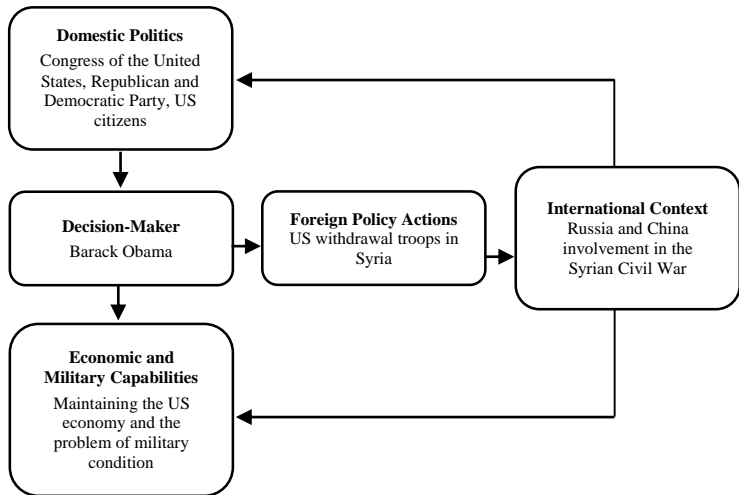
“International condition is a product of foreign policy of states in the past, present, or even future that might be or be anticipated.” (Coplin W. d., 1971)

The international context occurred outside the country and beyond state control. In the case of the Syrian Civil War, United States intervention affected diplomatic relations between Turkey, Britain, Russia, China, and other countries. For example, Russia and China’s involvement in the Syrian Civil War to support Assad. Also, when the UN decided to issue several resolutions on Syria, Russia and China vetoed the resolution. Susan Rice as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations said the successive veto of two permanent members of the Council such as Russia and China was an effort to defend Assad until the end of the war. (Khashanah, 2014)

Indeed, many non-Western powers, such as China and Russia, expressed their doubts and disapproval of this initiative both before and after the implementation of the 2005 Convention. China and Russia are defined as the

most critical on the international political stage and in the academic literature of the non-Western powers in view of their privileged status as permanent UNSC members. (Bellamy, 2009)

Figure 1.2
U.S. Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process



As a result, foreign policy decision-making theory is a theory that can answer the factors that cause the United States' failure in implementing *'Responsibility to Protect'* in the Syrian Civil War, such as domestic politics, economy and military capabilities, and international context. The United States seeks to prioritize their national security interests. Barack Obama as a *'decision-maker'* strives to consider the opinions of Congress and the public. Barack Obama believes that the wishes of Congress and Americans are for a better United States.

2. CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (RTO P)

The concept of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) became one of the solutions internationally to prevent genocide and protect victims from mass atrocities. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P or RtoP) was a global political commitment that was approved in the 2005 World Summit by all the UN Member States and reaffirmed twice since by the UN Security Council to solve the four main issues, such as prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The RtoP principle rests on three pillars: (1) the primary responsibility of states to protect their own populations from the four crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, as well as from their incitement; (2) the international community's responsibility to assist a state to fulfill its RtoP; and (3) the international community's responsibility to take timely and decisive action, in accordance with the UN Charter, in cases where the state has manifestly failed to protect its population from one or more of the four crimes. (Moon, 2009)

The RtoP principle differed from the previous concept of humanitarian intervention which emphasized the state (the main actor) to be responsible for protecting its own population. The RtoP concept created a new idea that the international community has the right to help countries experiencing mass atrocities and brought armed intervention to a broader scope. The RtoP concept was adopted by the international community after witnessing many mass atrocities and genocide.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document about '*Responsibility to Protect*' articulated in paragraphs 138–139:

138. Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.

139. The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out. (UN, 2005)

In the last seven years, the Syrian Civil War resulted in the deaths of 500,000 people, 5 million refugees, and 7,000,000 million of refugees. The Commission on Inquiry, mandated by the Human Rights Council, has found the Syrian government while working with allied militias, has committed large-scale massacres, perpetrated war crimes and gross violations of international humanitarian law as a matter of state policy.

In order to stop these atrocities, the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), the League of Arab States, and other countries had agreed to hold

meetings to discuss the situation. The conclusion was made that the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which increased the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as a nationwide cessation of hostilities, was required in order to help those in need.

As a result, the concept of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) can be used as strong evidence that the United States is carrying out humanitarian intervention in Syria, it was not because of the national interest behind it. In addition, the United Nations was trying to use the '*pressure act*' as a monitor of human rights violations toward the United States to implement '*Responsibility to Protect*' in the Syrian Civil War based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254. The '*pressure act*' by United Nations made the United States expanding the role of the state to become an international community and did a humanitarian intervention to protect all populations whose government could not protect their people.

E. RESEARCH ARGUMENT

Based on the foreign policy decision-making theory, this research explains the factors that caused the United States' failure in implementing '*Responsibility to Protect*' in the Syrian Civil war, which consists of domestic and international factors, those are:

1. The majority of Congress members did not support Obama to intervene in Syria;
2. The United States' citizens criticized Obama's actions;

3. The scarcity of the United States' economy and military resources.
4. Russia and China's involvement in the Syrian Civil War.

F. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the author used qualitative research method. The qualitative method combined three-aspect processes: description, classification, and connection. With this merger, an appropriate analysis could be obtained to answer the problem statement about what factors caused the United States to fail in implementing the *Responsibility to Protect* in the Syrian Civil War.

The author's method of collecting data was literature review. In this case, the author used written data through books, journals, papers, magazines, news, and other publications that were related and simultaneously supported the research process.

G. RESEARCH PERIOD

The research period began in 2011-2016. 2011 was the beginning of the Syrian Civil War. Then, in 2013, it found facts of atrocities committed by the Assad government using chemical weapons by United Nations. Also, in 2014-2016 was the United States' intervention until Barack Obama failed in implementing Responsibility to Protect in the Syrian Civil War.

H. RESEARCH SYSTEMATICS

The first chapter discusses the background, the research question that arises from the background, the theoretical framework used, the research argument, the research method, and the research systematics.

The second chapter discusses the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, some causes, factors, and explanations of developments in the Syrian civil war from 2011 until the United States has decided to intervene in the war. This chapter also will explain the regime of Bashar Al-Assad until he failed to implement the regime and opposed by civilians. Moreover, this chapter explains how pre-war relations between the U.S. and Syria were, and when the war took place before Barack Obama decided to intervene directly to Syria.

The third chapter discusses Barack Obama's Foreign Policy in the United States intervention toward Syria. Then, this chapter explains the timeline of United States' intervention based on the concept of Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) and UNSC Resolution 2254, also the United States' effort to implement RtoP in the Syrian Civil War.

The fourth chapter explains the main substance of this research. This chapter analyzes the domestic and international factors that cause the United States' failure in implementing '*Responsibility to Protect*' in the Syrian War based on the Foreign Policy Decision-Making theory and compare some successful countries with US failures in RtoP implementation.

The last chapter describes the conclusion from this research regarding the United States' failure in

implementing '*Responsibility to Protect*' in the Syrian Civil War.