International Organizations Intervention in The Syrian Conflict Through Chemical Weapons Violation

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Abstract

This paper aims to answer why chemical weapons such as Sarin and Chlorine are used as a primary basis of International Organizations to carry out the humanitarian intervention in the Syrian conflict. In this case, the humanitarian approach related to freedom from fear echoed by Galtung further elaborated with International Organizations Theory. Based on an investigation conducted by an International Organization, namely, the United Nations, found not only Bashar Al-Assad’s regime used chemical weapons but also the opposition. However, the scale and intensity of their use were different. Instead of targeting the enemy using chemical weapons, the primarily affected victims are civilians who indicated support the opposition and vice versa. International organizations then tried to negotiate with Assad’s regime, the often party uses chemical weapons, and also the opposition to avoid using chemical weapons. Next followed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which opened humanitarian diplomacy with Assad’s regime and the opposition to stop using chemical weapons. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has successfully suppressed chemical weapons use by imposing international sanctions. However, sometimes the vetoes of allies allied with the Assad regime have the effect to imposing sanction on Assad’s regime.

Keywords: Syria; Chemical Weapons; Human Security; International Organization.


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INTRODUCTION

Discussing the Syrian conflict in the globalization era, of course, we cannot only discuss it from a realist point of view because realists see international relations as a "State of War" that cannot avoid except by employing Leviathan. So, violence will continue to occur to create stability which is the closest way to peace (Richmond, 2020). More than it, conflict in Syria requires attention to the more tangible aspects of war's effects, namely environmental damage and casualties. From this, the most crucial aspect that must be considered is human security which includes many dimensions.

Briefly, the Syrian conflict began to heat up when the Syrian people's rioters developed into opposition, and directly declared resistance to Bashar Al-Assad's regime, then created an organization called the Free Syrian Army (FSA). This mass act of opposition eventually led to an internal armed conflict in Syria on July 29, 2011. The FSA has no political goals except to overthrow Bashar al-Assad as President of Syria. Furthermore, what happened in Syria was very dilemmatic, referring to the use of chemical weapons (CW) such as Sarin and Chlorine gas. It was recorded the Syrian government had used CW in the form of Sarin three times to fight the opposition in 2013, 2017, and 2018 (Bell, 2018).

According to White House records, Sarin and Chlorine have been used 50 times. According to public records, it has occurred 200 times. Previously, Sarin was a type of chemical weapon in the form of a very lethal liquid. If contaminated with air, it would damage the lungs instantly. Besides that, the effects of Sarin could damage through direct contact with exposed victims, and the environment where Sarin was shot was not safe to live in for a long time. Long term and its effect on individual health in the long term, sudden death is also a direct effect of Sarin.

To make this article focus on the violation of the use of chemical weapons which resulted in the intervention of international organizations in order to save people in upholding human values, namely freedom from want, fear and dignity, the authors took three articles to help strengthen the purpose and benefits of these articles in the study of peace and global human security, namely as follows.

Gabriele Lombardo, in his article entitled The Responsibility to protect and the lack of intervention in Syria between the protection of human rights and geopolitical strategies, describes the importance of RtP. In short, RtP was first carried out in the Balkan region under the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty of States (ICISS) initiated by Canada and was successful. The responsibility of ICISS is to prevent, react and rebuild. In every conflict or war, humanitarian intervention must be carried out to prevent many victims, especially in civil society. In essence, humanitarian intervention is also an act of violating state sovereignty. However, intervention in the name of humanity is legal if the international community judges that the state can no longer provide a sense of security to its citizens when a prolonged conflict hits its territory. Essentially, the state is the party responsible for maintaining and protecting its citizens.

ICISS will intervene through RTP by taking action, namely issuing an early warning to the ruling government or the opposition by starting to prepare for humanitarian intervention, such as announcing international sanctions to embarrass military intervention in conflict areas. The international community, part of the RtP, must carry out its duties, namely repairing or rebuilding post-intervention areas. Regarding the application of RtP in Syria, the problem is very complex compared to countries hit by the Arab Spring, such as Tunisia and Libya. The two citizens of this country want radical changes in terms of the system of government, law, and enforcement of democracy, and democracy can enforce successfully.

However, the conflict is getting more complex because Syria has allied with China and Russia, so humanitarian intervention is increasingly challenging, with the China and Russia alibis helping the Assad Government uphold human rights from opposition attacks considered terrorism. As well as Syria thinks that China and Russia understand the dynamics of Syria's Geopolitics the most. This research is very focused on RtP, and the results of the research show that RtP is challenging to implement in Syria because there is pressure and supervision from China and Russia because it indicates RtP is a foreign party that exacerbates the conflict so that a peace
agreement is difficult to achieve. In comparison, the author's research will discuss the focus of international organizations entering Syria using chemical weapons in conflict areas that violate international law. (Lombardo, 2015)

In an article by İbrahim İrdem And Yavor Raychev, entitled Syrian Mass Migration in the 2015 EU Refugee Crisis: A Hybrid Threat or Chance for Implementing Migration Diplomacy? explained that since the Arab Spring, the countries that are members of the European Union have become the leading destination for countries affected by the civil war, Syria is no exception. The main reason the EU was considered safe and stable, both economically and politically, but not yet. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

This paper further explains that the Arab Spring in Syria differs significantly from what happened in Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, and Egypt. If in these Arab countries, the Arab Spring shows a change in the system of government for the better, starting from improving the parliament and the electoral system of the ruling government to eliminating authoritarianism. In contrast to Syria, the Arab Spring is defined as a war between civilians and the opposition to reach the reins of government. Too many organizations, tribes, or sects have taken a role in the conflict. For example, the majority are Sunni Muslims, the Alawite Shi’ite sect, Syrian Kurds, and the terrorist organization ISIS. They have their ideas about the future of Syria, creating their political map regarding achieving Syrian peace. This viewpoint further destroys civil society because the government of Bashar Al-Assad considers that all areas controlled or inhabited by groups opposed to it are enemies. However, those who live are civilians not affiliated with any group.

US intervention to support the opposition and destroy ISIS is also further detrimental to achieving peace. The air and ground military forces were deployed also considered useless because of Russia’s strong support. With these facts, it stated that what is happening in Syria is a proxy war between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Turkey, the US, and Russia, located in Syria. So while this proxy war occurs, peace will be difficult to achieve. Because weapons suppliers are noticeable actors, civil society finds it difficult to lean towards the government or the opposition because they are in a desperate position to live. Namely obtaining the necessities of life from the government or the opposition while they need to survive the fear, hunger, and rights to life that should be attached to humans that they do not have amid a war not known when it will end. This research is very focused on the actors involved in the conflict arena. In contrast, the focus of the researchers in developing this article is to explain how international organizations can enter into conflict areas to save and provide basic human needs and maintain the dignity of human life amid conflict. (İrdem & Raychev, 2021)

Fernando R. Tesón, in his article entitled The Case for Armed Intervention against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, explains that the essence of humanitarian intervention is to fight against atrocities and attacks originating from the government itself or other groups. The focus of humanitarian intervention is humans who experience the urgency of life. Interventions are to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other forms of tyranny and oppression that take away dignity and the right to life. Humanitarian intervention is a legal action with a single reason, namely defending humans who are vulnerable and are feared to experience violence. In the context of fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria, it is natural for military action to stop the ISIS movement, even with the fact that the practice of killings and attacks on civil society has become a strong foundation for the international community to push for humanitarian intervention in precisely the country where ISIS is carrying out its actions.

ISIS, entrenched in Syria and Iraq, is vicious towards humans. Isis did not hesitate to kill people who did not believe or apostate, homosexuals, and even people they considered adulterers. Crimes against women, namely trafficking women, has used as a courtesan. Many commit suicide because they will feel further torment if they survive. Meanwhile, if they are escaped and caught, they will suffer more severe torture and be an example to other prisoners, so they do not do the same thing. The difference between this article and the author's research is that the author does not mention in detail ISIS, ISIS atrocities, and the intervention of state actors who were deployed to ISIS areas to save people from ISIS cruelty. (Tesón, 2016)
From the articles above and the differences in articles that the author's research has reviewed, this study aims to explain the use of chemical weapons in Syria as a strong foundation for humanitarian intervention by international organizations. The next objective of this research is to explain prohibited weapons from being used during wars or conflicts, namely sarin, and chlorine, and the effects that occur when humans inhale these two chemical weapons. Finally, humanitarian intervention through the use of chemicals, namely sarin, and chlorine, is very effective in saving people in conflict areas because it also conveys the impact that these chemical weapons have had on both sides, namely the army or government militants and the opposition, who have little knowledge about the effects of inhaling substances toxic chemicals they used in conflict areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Securitization of Humanitarian Issues In Syria

Humanitarian intervention is an important point in Syrian conflict because according to Galtung (Webel & Galtung, 2007) the violence arising from conflict will prevent humans from reaching their potential. For this reason, the use CW, especially Sarin and Chlorine are the main focus on humanitarian, moreover this concerns about “freedom from fear”, namely humans must be free from threats and violence in their daily lives. Freedom from fear, in this conflict related to booby traps, child soldiers, impunity, proliferation of weapons and the effects of using weapons which are prohibited in the UN Charter (Richmond, 2020). The use of Sarin and Chlorine are also important to study because that CW was not allowed to be used according to International Humanitarian Law.

Assad's regime's created national security by using Sarin against the opposition has become ambiguous. In this case, civilians were explicitly targeted and have become the primary victims. For this reason, it is appropriate to deepen who is being targeted by the Syrian government because if the focus is on state security, the context of resistance should be on the enemy who threatens the state and individuals within it, so civil rights should take precedence. On the other hand, the world currently sees security as a focus on individuals as parties entitled to security. So the global community has the right to act when it finds a
situation where the state can no longer protect its citizens through humanitarian operations, monitoring missions, diplomatic pressure, and even military intervention as a last choice (Richmond, 2020).

For this reason, it is necessary to employ the international organization's theory in this case. An international organization's main strength is to negotiate on a large scale beyond what states can do. Negotiations usually involve emphasizing military power, reducing international aid, or even government intervention that undermines humanitarian norms.

Negotiations are usually supported by superpowers which are called the "Second Face of Power" in negotiations conducted by international organizations. Second face of power can act as an agenda setter. For example, the Second face of power can push international organizations to take action in which country will be the object, what will be discussed, and what should be avoided during negotiations for the sake of goals. United Nations humanitarian aid organizations. In this case, they are more active than other human rights organizations. This UN-owned organization is more prominent in scope, has more considerable funds, and has an excellent management system (Barkin, 2017).

Humanitarian intervention is crucial in the Syrian conflict because, the violence arising from conflict will prevent humans from reaching their potential. For this reason, the use of CW, especially Sarin and Chlorine, is the primary focus on humanitarianism. Moreover, this concerns "freedom from fear," Humans must be free from threats and violence in their daily lives. Freedom from fear in this conflict related to booby traps, child soldiers, impunity, the proliferation of weapons, and the effects of using weapons prohibited in the UN Charter (Richmond, 2008).

The use of Sarin and Chlorine is also essential to study because that CW was not allowed to use according to International Humanitarian Law. Need to be noted, the issue regarding the use of CW, especially Sarin in Syria, is essential for securitization because there is an element of urgency in handling it. Otherwise, individual security will continue threats, moreover the involvement of many actors in it. In addition, what Syria has done by using sarin gas is considered to have caused a "problem of harm." From this, let us look at it from a critical perspective which assumes that the existence of the principle of crime is universal and regarding the category of crime obliges various parties to avoid injuring parties who are not involved in the conflict, that is, civilians (Linklater, 2007).

The war between countries clearly does not exist in the Syrian conflict, but the government vs. the opposition makes this conflict at the level of a contemporary war whose characteristics include: actors, motives, means, spatial context, impact or human suffering, and the political or war economy. All of these characteristics are then supported by the involvement of non-state actors, explicit targeting of civilians, funding supported by non-state actors, and the fight against an illegal war economy, one of which concerns the military-industrial complex (Gasper, 2015).

Chemical Weapons Violations In The Syrian Conflict

The Syrian conflict is no longer classified as a traditional "state-centric" war in order to secure national interest because there has been a violent conflict as a political contestation within it by ignoring individual rights. In addition, when viewed from a liberal perspective with an emphasis on positive rights, the country must play an active role in ensuring that humanitarian services and programs run well rather than just providing legal mechanisms to ensure individual rights are protected.

But this cannot be carried out because until now, Syria has not been able to avoid the war, the civil war continues to flare up, and establishment separatist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have become one of the strong facts that the role of the state as emphasized in positive rights cannot work at all in creating peace and fulfill individual rights, especially the protection of children as future generations of peacemakers and also other vulnerable groups (Alkaff, 2016).

If so, the world must understand Syrian conflict has created real insecurity, so it really needs to be securitized. Isn't there actually no glory in the war for both parties who feel legitimate or those who feel they are always being harmed. But surely had existed are victims, and victims will continue to fall as long as they do not get their rights in this conflict,
that is, "freedom from fear" and if this insecurity continues in Syria, then it can also be assumed that the world does not care at all about the Syrian conflict, there is neglect and indifference (Boer, 2008).

For this reason, according to Buzan, (Buzan, 1991) security should not be fully focused on state security which feels its existence is being disturbed, but individual security is the most vulnerable group. In this case, the state, which is supposed to be the protector of its citizens, turns out to be the cause of insecurity for its citizens. The state cannot reduce security problems. One of the indications is the use of Sarin which is prohibited by international humanitarian law where most of the victims are civilians.

In the injury category, what Assad’s regime has done to civilians (deliberate harm caused by the government to their own citizens) because of certain matters of the government has caused harm to its own civilians, exactly the use of Sarin. This then needs humanitarian intervention by referring to various pretexts, for example, referring to the UN charter or, more contemporarily, the Responsibility to Protect principle and the Just War principle, which tolerates military intervention to avoid continuing humanitarian disasters (Hadiwinata, 2017).

Besides that, too many actors play in the Syrian conflict, starting from state actors and non-state actors. For example, from non-state actors, ISIS takes a position. The reason for the existence of ISIS is the Syrian government feels it is appropriate to use CW to target rioter groups as well as ISIS. Syria's position in the Middle East also makes it difficult to save individual security in that country because each country in that region has declared its side with the United States (US) or Russia, so the conflict in Syria is conditionally on various political interests. The countries involved include the US, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Furthermore, what is happening in Syria is a dilemma. Spillover between Syria and Iraq and the use of CW has become an important point of international concern. The international community began to be concerned and respond when Assad’s regime used CW, plus the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a rioter group that took part in the conflict, also using CW (Chapman, 2017).

For this reason, humanitarian intervention is needed in Syria since Sarin has found had used. It is strictly prohibited in a conflict area. On the other hand, the use of Sarin also has an effect on the environment, health, and individual security as part of the expansion of securitization in the contemporary era, providing justification Syrian conflict must be intervened. Basically, CW in the form of Sarin is one of the actions prohibited in the rules of war in the Geneva Conventions. (Bell, 2018) Related to the use of weapons, it cannot distinguish between targets and civilians. These rules are spelled out in the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, mentioned in Additional Protocols I and II. At the Geneva Convention in 1977 and the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993. This regulation does not only apply to International Armed but also applies to non-International Armed Conflicts (domestic) that occurred in Syria (Henckaerts, 2005).

If traced, ISIS for the first time using CW in July 2014, until December 2017, it had used 71 times. Non-state actors have never made the relatively routine use of CW. The difference between Assad’s Regime and ISIS is that the CW used by ISIS is Chlorine, a poisonous gas that has a less lethal effect on humans. The purpose of using CW by ISIS is to create maximum violence. Chlorine may not consume as many victims as Sarin. However, it is pretty effective in giving a deep sense of fear and insecurity because it causes accumulation of fluids in the lungs and causes death if not handled properly (Mosher, 2018).

On the other hand, Sarin, used by Assad's regime, can damage the environment and torture human vital organs by inhaling it slowly before dying and transmitting it through physical contact between the victim and the rescuers. More terrible is that Sarin has no smell or taste, so it cannot easily detect whether the air is polluted (Taylor, 2018). The constellation of Sarin used by Assad’s regime has been recorded several times in 2013, 2017, and 2018.

It is a complicated question in the Syrian conflict about how to take action to secure civilians because using CW has been politicized. If we think deeply again, who are the actors who support the illegal provision of CW because Syria is no longer classified as a normal country. Since Arab spring spread, the state function has not gone well. So the question is
who is legitimate to lead Syria, who can save the civilians in it as vulnerable to any insecurity that might come in a very sudden way.

If deeply retraced, the answer obtained is Syria got CW from Russia. This accusation arose because Syria tried to maintain Assad’s regime legitimacy. The regime allied itself with Russia and Iran. (Hasuguiuan, 2018) Russia is the party most responsible for the use of Sarin. This accusation had reinforced by OPCW and UN, which led to Russia deploying CW with evidence that Russian helicopters used to detonate bombs containing Sarin and Chlorine. Sanctions were given based on Article I of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC), prohibiting countries from transferring, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone (Horner, 2013).

**Timeline of Chemical Weapons Used In Syria**

Let’s refer to CW escalation used by Assad’s regime in 2013, March and August, Sarin was used in the Khan al-Asal and Ghouta, Damascus. On April, 2017 in the Khan Sheikhoun, the last one in Douma on April, 2018. In general, Chemical weapons were used by dropping gas cylinders using helicopters onto settlements considered Assad’s opponents, for example, in Douma. The gas cylinders have a high chlorine concentration, intended to target people’s homes down to the bottom floors, which are used as shelter from military attacks. The use of chemical weapons is based on 70 environmental samples and 66 statements of witnesses. However, the Assad regime denied the witness statement by stating that they were suffering from hypoxia or self-poisoning.

The utilization of CW in 2018 also attracted the world’s attention, because the White House under Trump’s administration has a different perspective on dealing with conflicts in Middle East when compared to its predecessors. After the attack on Doum, Trump said the US and its allies France and Britain would launch airstrikes against the Assad’s regime, but fierce evidence of Sarin’s use was hard to find. Russia says the issue about Sarin is a mouthpiece to open up opportunities for western intervention in Syria. In this case, the US-Russia again referred to the UN security council. Holding a vote but not producing a definite reference because the two countries have equal veto rights in making a decision.

The CW used by Assad’s regime is a clear violation of Syria’s obligations under CWC and Security Council Resolutions. On the other hand, the US stated that Russia had failed to prevent Syria as its ally in maintaining its role as a guarantor for the CWC deal made in 2013. For this reason, US, UK, and France threatened to carry out attacks on Syria to paralyze Syria’s chemical weapons facilities (Kimball, 2016). International investigators blame the Assad regime, including the OPCW, especially for the misuse of sarin and chlorine, which focuses on areas opposing the Assad regime. However, in every statement, the Syrian government always blames the opposition.

**International Organizations Intervention In The Syrian Conflict**

Human security agenda in Syrian faces many new challenges, many actors who had been involved, arms race exacerbate the situation saving civilians. One of the actions that might be successful is to carry out diplomacy in accordance with existing conditions. That is intervention through CW violations issue in order to find a gap into the main agenda, namely human security to achieve “freedom from fear”.

The human security agenda in Syrian faces many new challenges. Many actors are involved. Also, the arms race exacerbates the situation of saving civilians. One of the actions that might be successful is to carry out diplomacy following existing conditions. That is intervention through CW violations to find a gap in the main agenda, namely human security, to achieve “freedom from fear.”

It can say that the most ambitious and strategic humanitarian effort in the Syrian conflict is chemical disarmament. Due to several factors, among others, Assad’s regime refusal to close demilitarized areas, The reluctance of countries involved in the conflict to destroy its chemical stocks, accusations and denials about CW, and the targets of CW. Which cannot distinguish between defiant and civilians, and many actors who interrelated in the conflict area. So, the gap in the CW violations taken to intervene through the use of CW, especially Sarin, is because the conflict is very complicated to enter compared to other
Arab countries which were previously affected by the Arab Spring, for example, Libya and Egypt.

Politics contestation in it make it more complicated, such as a conflict between Sunni and Shia, which become one of the causes of the difficulty in the Syrian conflict intervention by the international community. Also, the alignment of the two most influential countries in the Middle East. That is Iran and Saudi Arabia in seeing the Syrian conflict. Also, the existence of Russia and US wanted to end the conflict but instead created an alliance bloc that did not show any agreement with each other. Hence, the conflict continues, and the use of CW is still happening.

Coupled with ISIS presence which is increasingly undermining human security in it, on the other hand, Assad’s regime must face opposition as well as ISIS. However, civilians must survive attacks launched by the Assad’s regime through the use of CW, which knows no boundaries between targets or civilians and defend themselves from the threat of ISIS. For this reason, from the red in the use of Sarin, the international community has valid legitimacy to save individuals trapped in conflict (Alkaff, 2015).

Diplomacy on disarmament CW in the Syrian conflict carried by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council and the UN Security Council in 2013 since the incident using Sarin, with a decision in mid-2014, chemical weapons had to be removed from the conflict. The destruction of Syria’s CW carried out in 2013 and 2014 at the same time indicates this is the most extraordinary event of multilateral disarmament amid a perilous and expensive civil war. This at least reduces mass threat attacks on civilians and the amount of CW supplies to neighboring countries. Due to the brutal Sarin used by the Assad’s regime in 2013 in Damascus, international concern emerged for individual security (Walker, 2014).

So, US and Russia took the initiative to bring Syria join CWC to eliminate chemical weapons stockpiles and other related production capacities. It is also on the advice of OPCW-UN that France, Britain, and the United States are pushing the Security Council to impose punitive sanctions on Assad’s regime for continuing to use Chlorine as a weapon. Because it was proven again to use similar substances in subsequent attacks, the ambassadors of these countries to the UN also continued to support the OPCW to continue monitoring developments in the use of CW.

UN again extended its investigation about CW in Syria because it discovered again using CW in 2014-2015. Besides, OPCW and UN had difficulty imposing sanctions on Syria due to objections from Russia as its closest ally. OPCW said Assad’s regime should take responsibility for the use of CW. However, denial came from Russia, arguing there was no substantial evidence. In conclusion, Syria did not need sanctions.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Syrian conflict it is very relevant to state securitization urgently needed when insecurity arises. International organizations is the main actor for carrying out speech acts, in campaigning for what threats the Syrian existential threat actually faces, to be aimed at the audience to other parties, both NGOs, other countries and other actors to believe in the existential threat so that it influences the referent object, namely the party that threatened or disrupted if the issue is not addressed (Buzan et al., 2003).

However, speech acts heavily influence securitization because it will influence the state or institution to act. So, humanitarian issues in Syria must be reconstructed by no longer discussing wars between countries and military power. Furthermore, it is concerned about human security and other forms of crime, namely crimes committed by non-state actors (terrorism, opponent, crime) and crimes committed by the state against its civilians (violence, discrimination, and neglect).

It indicates that contemporary wars cannot be finished simply by facilitating the warring parties. Nevertheless, one must be able to see the goals of the actors involved. For this reason, the conflict in Syria differs from conflicts in Arab countries that have been affected by Arab Spring. In this case, innovations and foresight will require to see the right opportunity in order to be able to intervene to save the civilians as the most disadvantaged victim of the conflict.

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