THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND IMPASSES AMONG THE P5 AND THE CONSEQUENT LACK OF RESOLUTION FOR THE QUESTION

Fernanda Guimarães¹
Patrícia Nasser de Carvalho²

Introduction

The demand for resolution of conflicts that pose threats to international peace and security is the main reason for the existence and operation of the United Nations Security Council. Throughout its history, the body in question has allowed multilateral deliberations on the major humanitarian crises of modernity, seeking legitimate means to achieve peace and stability among peoples.

The way in which the Security Council operates is intrinsic to its conformation, functioning under an exclusivist and hierarchical dynamic within the international community. Thus, the guidelines brought to discussion among the meetings held by the member countries of the organ are analyzed under biased perspectives, oriented under the influence of the national interests of the nations involved in the decision-making procedures about the operability of the organ, especially the permanent members that holds the power of veto.

¹ Bachelor’s Degree in International Economic Relations from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Fellow of of the research, tutoring and outreach program “Pronoturno REI”. E-mail: ffeguimaraes@gmail.com.
² Adjunct Professor at the School of Economic Sciences (FACE) of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). PhD in International Political Economy from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Master’s Degree in International Relations from Fluminense Federal University (UFF). E-mail: patricianasser@cedeplar.ufmg.br.
This article analyzes the case of the Syrian civil war, which rose in 2011 from the so-called Arab Spring events, seeking to illustrate how the Security Council can be used to exploit the individual and national interests of its member countries in the region in question, considering the relevance of a multiplicity of geostrategic, political, economic and military aspects. In addition, there is also the involvement of other non-state actors, such as militia groups and terrorist organizations that emerge in this scenario as other elements that represent threats to international security.

Therefore, the central objective of this paper is to demonstrate that the lack of direct intervention by the Security Council in the civil conflict in Syria stems from the constant clash between the member countries of the body, motivated by their polarized and antagonistic interests on this issue, so that the use of the veto in several resolutions prevented the Security Council from deliberating on practical action for an adequate resolution of the humanitarian crisis on Syrian territory. Thus, the United Nations action on this issue will remain in a deadlock due to the divergence of interests shown by the countries with the greatest decision-making power in the highest security body of the organization.

The first section of this article provides a definition of the Security Council and an explanation of its operation in a legitimate manner in accordance with the basic principles of the United Nations. The second section is a contextualization of the Syrian civil war and the constitution of the totalitarian regime of the Assad family, directly responsible for the human rights violations that led the conflict to escalate to the condition of a global security crisis and made it possible to be discussed in the Security Council, as well as the involvement of the international community and various non-state actors in the situation. The third section deals with how the Security Council positions itself on the conflict in question, reflecting the instrumentation of the national interests of its member countries in the region.

The Security Council and World Peace

The Security Council is the organ of the United Nations (UN) whose function is the maintenance of international peace and security. The structure that gives rise to it is expressed in Chapter V of the Charter of the United Nations and its activities are conducted by Chapters VI, VII and VIII. It is the duty of the Council, therefore, to identify the existence of threats to peace or acts of aggression and immediately convene the parties for dialogue using peaceful means, and therefore, recommend methods and terms for a resolu-
tion for the situation (United Nations 2016).

The composition of the Security Council consists of five permanent members: China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States; together with ten non-permanent members elected every two years by the General Assembly, and the rotation is aimed at broadly encompassing representations with geographical diversity. States that are members of the United Nations but not of the Security Council may attend meetings within the Council in situations where the topic under discussion directly affects their interests, however, this participation is devoid of the possibility of voting, so that the countries have observer status (United Nations 2016).

The UN Charter institutionalizes the functions and powers of the Security Council. Thus, through this instrument, it is assigned to the organ the “monopoly on the authorization of military and non-military coercion, safeguarding the individual or collective right to self-defense” (Amorim 1988, 7). Measures taken under Chapter VII are the only manifestations that demonstrate the use of authority by the Security Council, since they can be pursued without the consent of other actors in the international system.

Faced with the current paradigms of global governance, the Security Council should play the role of an actor with active participation in security issues on the global agenda through what, in theory, should be the joint action of its member countries. The Security Council would, therefore, carry out the interference - including on occasions when it is necessary to use force - in a multilateral way in places where threats to international peace have taken hold. Thus, it allows the states to enable direct intervention in other states, in accordance with the principles and procedures described in the Charter of the United Nations, in situations that may represent a crisis to global stability. In this way, the Security Council is implementing the objectives of member states to address critical situations (Abbot and Snidal 1998).

The problem arises when, in the deviation from theory to reality, the Security Council is no longer guided by the multilateral coordination of its member countries and becomes the scene of individual interest disputes, in which external agendas overlap with the topic in question and joint action is not present. Thus, the organ presents itself as “a place for codified, ritualistic diplomacy, permeated by protocol artifices, subtleties of language and procedural tactics that can both mask and make more evident the interests of its members” (Garcia 2013, 101). The great asymmetry between the national positions of the member states inserted in a multilateral context is therefore remarkable, resulting in inconsistencies in the operationality of the Security Council.

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3 Denominated P5, acronym which stands for Permanent Five.
Council in the face of various issues sensitive to the stability of the international community.

The inconstancy of the action by the Security Council resulting from this framework of overlapping interests of its component members highlights the questioning of the real assertiveness of the body in ensuring the maintenance of global peace and security. In current international relations, the influence and effectiveness of the agency on the most sensitive topics to the international community “seem to have been, on the other hand, overlooked by the pursuit of objectives of different natures” of the member countries, especially in the area of “maintaining its validity in a world that tends to revolve around national interests and power” (Tomassini 1995, 222).

The increase in the functions assigned to the United Nations since recent decades and the diversification of the number and complexity of the problems for which the organization is responsible, including the Security Council and its attributions in a multipolar world order that was established in the post-Cold War, “accentuated the perception of the contrast between results and promises, despite acknowledging the limited effectiveness of the UN to negotiate or resolve these problems” (Tomassini 1995, 222). This contrast is especially evident when considering the involvement of the Council in complex local conflicts, in which a large multiplicity of actors is present in an intricate network of threats to global stability.

The configuration of the Security Council is governed by its hierarchical, centralizing and exclusivist nature. The Council is the only body within the scope of the United Nations in which the broad participation of all member states of the organization is vetoed. Moreover, there is a clear distinction between the permanent and the non-permanent members within the body of the organ, so that the status of permanent members in occupying the seats of the Council grants the approval of the use of the veto, according to the interests presented by the country in the middle of the negotiations (Amorim 1988). In this way, the chance of making use of the Security Council advantage is problematic. So, its capacity for coercive action on the international stage, as a means of instrumentalizing and legitimizing unilateral interests in the security issue, relies especially on nations occupying high positions in its hierarchical chain.

The manner in which the Security Council manages its actions, whether through discussions during meetings with its members or in the practical application of the agreed provisions, is representative of the main aspect of its composition, that is, the observance of interactions multilaterally inserted in a highly hierarchical and excluding environment. Thus, the management of the operationality demonstrated by the Security Council is subjected to the
dynamics that emanate from its configuration, with the actors that occupy higher positions in the core of this hierarchy, that is, the permanent members which are the custodians of the veto power, the makers - or, in certain cases, constrainers - of the operational exercise of the Security Council (Abbot and Snidal 1988).

The case of Syria’s civil war that began in 2011 is an event that poses threats to the maintenance of security stability on a global scale and illustrates how the involvement of state and non-state actors in events of relevance to the international system may occur, according to their geopolitical aspirations towards their external agendas.

The fact that the Syrian conflict has taken enormous proportions in terms of destruction of the patrimony, deaths, displacement of people and contingent of wounded people configures it like a humanitarian crisis that urges for the intervention on the part of powers that denote the resources, mechanisms and the ability to act to reduce the amount of damages. In this way, the situation was referred for discussion in the framework of the United Nations Security Council. However, the action of these powers - and therefore of the Security Council - on the Syrian situation is constantly instrumentalized by its strategic plans in the region as well as by its geopolitical aspirations on the international scene. As a result, we can observe the impotence of the agency in dealing with the situation and the consequent extension of the crisis in question.

The unique frame of the Security Council which denotes highly hierarchical and exclusivist aspects, such as the existence of permanent members and the possibility of the use of veto by these actors, to a certain extent, can be considered as an element that corroborates the lack of action of the organ regarding the humanitarian crisis in Syria. By allowing relevant powers in the area of international security to obtain veto power amidst the deliberations of the Council, the very dynamics and structure of the body makes it impossible for any resolution to be signed in the framework of these discussions as long as the agreed content goes against the external agendas of these actors. In this way, the agency is not performing with enough success in dealing with the situation in Syria.

The civil war in Syria and the involvement of the international community

The situation in Syria stems from instability intrinsic to the process of construction of its National State and the political movements resulting from
the attempt to maintain the order at the domestic level amid this situation. Syrian history, since its independence from French rule in 1946, was marked by a succession of coups until 1971, a period in which the Assad family rose to state control with the presidency of Hafez al-Assad. In 2000, after the death of the then president, his son Bashar takes the lead through political maneuvers of the Baath party, and thus remains until current times (Zahreddine 2013).

The rise of the Assad family to the leadership of the Syrian state was carried out and supported by the apparatus of the military force, considering the incompatibility of the Assad and their Alawite origin among a predominantly Sunni nation. However, even the hold of the force monopoly was not enough as a mechanism to ensure stability to the regime instituted by the Assad. The popular goal of leveraging the country under Islamic doctrine unleashed the process of trying to overthrow the Assad government and its ruling party. The high unpopularity shown by top Syrian officials, especially Bashar, materializes through political vulnerability, violence towards civilians and the involvement of other international actors. These factors, together, served to stagger a picture of instabilities that evolved in magnitude and complexity, leading to civil war in Syria (Hall 2013).

The composition of Syrian society, besides the precariousness of the socioeconomic conditions observed in the country, is one of the main factors that constitute the motivations for the outbreak of an internal conflict, because there is a clear situation of ethnic and religious dispute. In 2000, when Bashar ascended to power, the predominant religious group was Sunnis, amounting to almost 70% of the population, followed by the Alawites, accounting for 11.3% of the Syrian population. The remaining demographic was characterized as Christians, Druze and Shiites, accounting for 11.2%, 3.2% and 3.2% of the population, respectively. Moreover, in the middle of Syrian society, there are also relevant ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, Armenians and Palestinian refugees (Zahreddine 2013). It is clear, therefore, that the Syrian demographic design has contributed to accentuating issues of disputes and conflicts, so it is a difficult challenge to meet the aspirations and interests emanating from such diverse groups and to maintain cohesion amidst this scenario conducive to divergences.

The use of the force monopoly as a way of maintaining social cohesion, or at least creating the illusion that there was an orderly and harmonic structure observable in the population, is another motivating factor for the escalation of conflicts in Syria. The creation of an army that responds directly to the presidential orders, using military resources and violence as apparatus to inhibit disturbances of the public order and to curb manifestations
of opposition to the government instituted, demonstrates the tyrannical and authoritarian element of the Assad governments. However, this mechanism of maintenance of social cohesion through forced and coercive ways became a catalyst for the widespread dissatisfaction that plagued the Syrian population and subsequently manifested itself in the form of an inescapable internal crisis (Furtado, Roder and Aguilar 2014).

The situation of disputes and dissatisfaction in Syrian territory was exacerbated considering the context of demonstrations and protests that occurred in the Middle East and North Africa from the end of 2010, with the aim of modifying the current political order in these localities and claiming for more humane treatments of populations of these localities, which was named Arab Spring by social science scholars. The phenomenon in question encouraged movements in Syrian society to the extent that it demonstrated the possibility of achieving political achievements related to democracy through civil action, even in the face of an authoritarian and centralized governmental structure, as observed in most of the nations of this region. The case of Syria is emblematic in the Middle East, as it demonstrates the insurgency of groups that, although demographically in majority, did not find representativeness and political participation and, therefore, sought conditions of state administration that met their demands and expectations (Ramos 2015).

Therefore, the civil war in Syria thus broke out in 2011 after the Bashar regime reprisal of the pro-democratic movement attempts to voice the population’s dissatisfaction with the Syrian government and its legacy of repression since the coup which allowed the Assad family to rise to power. The popular demonstrations were answered with violent actions by the government, in an attempt to close the opposition activities (Rocha, Julio and Machry 2016).

Since it beginning, the conflict in Syria has attracted influential actors from the international community, notably the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The influence of external actors stems from the manifestation of political, economic and military interests that they nurture in relation to Syria, considering that the nation is a strategic point to convey its influence in the region of the Middle East. Thus, the Syrian civil war has taken on proportions that go beyond national borders, so that it has come to be considered a global conflict and, therefore, a threat to international peace and security (Furtado, Roder and Aguilar 2014).

The government of Bashar al-Assad has always been opposed by the United States of America. From the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, the United States provided financial resources, warfare and military training to the rebels, alleging that Assad was using chemical weapons to strengthen its coercive capacity vis-à-vis the Syrian population and thus as a counterpart in the
conflict, it was necessary to provide sufficient conditions for the opposition groups to be able to cope with the extremely violent actions that the government was carrying out. The Obama administration, therefore, made clear the intention of calling for intervention in Syrian territory, even if this action did not involve the landing of troops in the country, so that it would be possible to force the withdrawal of the current government and establish a transitional regime. This time, however, a regime susceptible to US demands (Pautasso and Rocha 2017).

Once the opposition was supported by the United States, Assad’s dictatorship was backed by Russia and later, due to its influence, by China. Relations between Syria and Russia date back to the independence of the nation in 1946, a period in which the global scenario experienced the Cold War. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union showed interest in making Syria a kind of representative in the Middle East, with the aim of acquiring an area under which it could use to exert influence in the region. Thus, the socialist bloc has established a way to extend its dominions to another strategic location. The game of balancing the military and economic power against the capitalist bloc, especially the United States, was then maintained, according to the precepts of the characteristic dispute of this period (Luz 2012).

The Syrian-Soviet partnerships established since the beginning of the Hafez al-Assad government in the 1970s are the milestone of closer ties among nations. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s and the consequent dismantling of the Soviet Union, however, did not provoke substantive changes at the core of international relations between Syria and Russia. Even with the death of Hafez, Russia continued to support the administration led by its successor, Bashar, even with the outbreak of Syrian civil conflict in recent years (Picolli, Machado and Monteiro 2016).

The Syrian conflict also had the involvement of state and non-state actors from the Middle East. Countries near Syria, notably Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, have spoken out against the conflict in opposition to the Bashar al-Assad regime, so there is evidence that these nations have provided military training and war resources to the rebels. On the other hand, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon are in favor of the Assad administration, providing money and intelligence teams with conflict expertise to support the government in this situation (Furtado, Roder and Aguilar 2014).

The rebels operating in Syrian territory are composed of militia groups of diverse origin, so that a uniform and unified ordering under this contin-

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4 It is important to emphasize that the Chinese position in relation to the Syrian government is justified by the alignment of that country’s foreign policy to Russian behavior on the international scene (Picolli, Machado and Monteiro 2016).
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gent is not observed. In this way, by finding that within the opposing section of the Assad regime there is a multiplicity of demands and interests, it is easier for supporters of rebellion to select the group that most easily reflects their interests and, thus, it would make the process of influencing the conflict in Syria in accordance with its strategic plans more effective. Therefore, it is possible to see, amidst the composition of the opposition to the dictatorial government, the presence of moderate and radical ideological groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, the Al-Nusra Front, the Syrian Free Army Military Command and the Islamic State of Iraq and Levante (Furtado, Roder and Aguilar 2014).

President Bashar, however, presents his support network beyond the aforementioned foreign powers. The main artifact used by Assad to secure the maintenance of the regime consists of the joint action between the Baath party and the Armed Forces, combining political maneuvers with the monopoly on the legitimate use of brute force among the state. In addition, there are militias acting in a favorable way to the regime, as is the case in which the Baath Brigades stand out, created based on the resources arranged by the party itself (Hall 2013).

The geopolitical situation in the Middle East, in the face of the Syrian crisis, has suffered an aggravation and shows changes in the political map of the region. The country’s old alliances with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas are increasingly weakened as Assad’s government suffer more attacks and there are signs of deposition. On the other hand, the proximity of regional powers favorable to the United States, like Saudi Arabia, indicates that the western mobilization gains space in this context. Moreover, the level of foreign intervention becomes more critical as the proportion of areas occupied by the Islamic State in Syrian territory increases, and thus there is more susceptibility to the formation of an international coalition that includes the United States - and its allies in the Security Council, France and the United Kingdom - together with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, with the aim of fighting against the Islamic State and neutralizing its operations in the current global scenario (Furtado, Roder and Aguilar 2014).

The Syrian civil war has therefore escalated to become a conflict of global proportions, given the involvement of various actors in the international community, and the high rate of deaths, serious injuries and refugees, so that it constitutes a serious humanitarian crisis in the region today. Thus, by posing a threat to international peace and security, the situation in Syria was addressed for discussion in the Security Council. The Syrian case reaches a new level of complexity on the international stage when it is handled in the United Nations security sphere, considering that the permanent members of
The body do not establish cohesive guidelines on what should be done to deal with the situation in question (Corrêa 2013).

The political game of power among members of the Security Council on the Syrian case

The need to deal with the harmful effects on the international community and the failure to respect the human rights caused by the Syrian crisis gives the Security Council the prerogative to act in an effective way on behalf of its constituent States. However, the action by the Security Council to neutralize the Syrian conflict cannot be considered fully successful because of the obstacles placed by the countries in center of the discussions, notably the permanent members, as a result of the difficulties of coordinating a joint action in agreement. Thus, there is a clear case of a lack of action by the United Nations on the Syrian conflict (Medzihorsky, Popovic and Jenne 2017).

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) issued a report in 2001 entitled Responsibility to Protect (R2P), whose main objective is to establish guidelines for ending mass atrocities observed in a number of vulnerable locations. Thus, countries should act according to three pillars that guide their responsibility regarding the intervention in these localities: to prevent, to react and to build. The first pillar describes that nations must obey the prerogative of protecting their citizens from crimes of mass atrocities, reinforcing the principle of sovereignty in the international system. The second pillar refers to the international community, establishing the commitment of other countries to provide assistance to nations in building capacities to prevent mass atrocities, and prevention being the central element of a successful strategy for R2P. The third pillar finally states that in cases where the state is insufficiently able to provide protection to its population, the international community has a responsibility to act, so that the situation of instability which poses a concrete threat to the well-being of this population is resolved by legitimate means (Stark 2011).

The scope of R2P was defined in 2005 from a United Nations summit, so that “each State has a responsibility to protect its populations through necessary and appropriate means, and the international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use diplomatic, humanitarian and peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations “ (Stark 2011, 4), which include the use of force by

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5 The meaning of effective is understood as the observance of the agency’s ability to ensure the establishment of international peace and security in accordance with the principles and guidelines set forth in the Charter.
military interventions in unstable locations.

The R2P protocol can therefore be used to justify such interventions in cases where it is observed “genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, which have been previously defined in international law by the Rome Statute and the International Court of Justice “(Stark 2011, 4). Thus, the Syrian situation demonstrates the requirements for it to fall under the aegis of R2P. However, there is no considered action to address the crisis, so that the international community, especially the Security Council, fails to exercise its responsibility to protect the Syrian population and to seek directives to neutralize the current threat to peace and international instability.

The objection to the modus operandi designated through R2P is expressed by some of the permanent members of the Security Council, notably China and Russia. By assuming positions contrary to the permission of direct military intervention in Syrian territory, the affinity based on interests of political, economic and military order that they present with the current government of Assad is evident, so that an intervention - mainly from the permission for the use of force - in this locality would generate the later deposition of this regime and the installation of another administration. On the other hand, it is alleged that the other members of the Security Council, the United States, France and the United Kingdom, intend to use the R2P protocol to instrumentalize their intention to promote interventions motivated by their biased national interests, among which the deposition of Assad’s power stands out as the most latent aspiration of these actors. It turns out that the result of this intervention is, according to the allegations, a higher number of unsuccessful military investitures on political and non-humanitarian grounds and, consequently, more instability and damage to the population (Medzihorsky, Popovic and Jenne 2017).

The situation in Syria has been going on for years since the conflict erupted, and until now the Security Council has been unable to find ways to reverse hostilities in the region. The lack of internal agreement within the body, in this way, is the main impediment to a more effective coordination to deal with civil war. The permanent members of the Security Council do not fit into a consensus-driven axis because of a complex scenario of intricate incompatibilities of interests in the region and its unfolding, reflecting the old polarization of the international system and being passed on to the dynamics the United States, the United Kingdom and France, and in contrast, Russia and China. Thus, the situation established by the Assad regime shows that the conjuncture in which the UN operates has an intrinsic fragility, in which “international justice and accountability are secondary to the main interests of its member countries” (DePetris 2016).
The largest front of disagreement between the deliberations of the Security Council is, therefore, constituted by the clash between the United States and Russia, the other permanent members being influenced by their respective allies in the international scene regarding the votes and procedures amidst the security discussions. The dichotomy represented by the aforementioned nations dates from the very beginning of the creation of the Security Council and has been ever since a factor motivating impasses amid the internal dynamics of the body, hindering negotiations in the multilateral sphere and leaving the Syrian situation without urgent remedies (Corrêa 2013).

Russia’s positioning, as it takes part in the Syrian conflict, is motivated by its orientation towards Russian foreign policy from the rise of Vladimir Putin to the nation’s presidency in the early 2000s. Since then, Russia has articulated key sectors of the economy, such as hydrocarbons and war, and in parallel with the intensification of economic development, Putin’s government seeks to become evident in the international community. The purpose of this conduct is to reinforce its position as one of the great global players in the securitization of the global agenda in the current context (Pautasso and Rocha 2016).

The historical relationship of support between the Assad government and the Russian nation, including even partnerships that extend to the military sphere, also indicates a substantial factor in understanding Russia’s position in the Syrian conflict. Thus, “the strategic bias that Russia gives to its participation in the conflict, as reflected by the need to maintain its outpost in the Middle East” (Piccolli, Machado and Monteiro 2016, 195). The Russian presence at the port located in Tartus, capital of the homonymous district, ensures this area in the Mediterranean Sea as under control and influence favorable to the Syrian government. In addition, the facility at the Hmeymim air base at Latakia in 2015 in the north-west of the Syrian Mediterranean coast also reinforces the strategic intentions pursued by Russia in the region. There is also the Russian navy in the Caspian Sea, reaching targets of the Islamic State based in Syria, in a clear demonstration of the military power of the nation (Piccolli, Machado and Monteiro 2016).

American action in relation to the Syrian conflict is opposite to that demonstrated by the Russian guidelines. Thus, the United States seeks to destabilize the Syrian dictatorship and to establish a government more favorable to Western interests, in accordance with the values of a neoliberal democracy. Following the guidelines set forth in the protocol determined by the United Nations, the United States centralized efforts to depose Assad’s dictatorial government not directly through the use of force, but rather by addressing the issue as a humanitarian crisis that should be solved urgently.
Moreover, the possibility of direct military intervention on Russian territory would not be feasible given the failed experience of NATO’s incursion into Afghanistan decades ago; together with the costs of financing such an investment in a context of global economic crisis (Arraes 2014).

The participation of the United States and Russia in the Syrian civil war also stems from economic motives, so that opposing positions are based on the competing projects regarding the supplying of the European market. The Russian government-backed project, that is, a joint venture with Syria, Iraq and Iran, consists on building a gas pipeline that will carry gas from Iran and Russia to Europe. On the other hand, there is also a gas pipeline project to supply European territory from Qatar reserves, passing through localities in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Israel (Piccolli, Machado and Monteiro 2016).

The internal dynamics of the Security Council are being modified as the domestic regimes of its component nations, especially the permanent members, change. Nowadays, it is possible to affirm that the stagnation of taking action within the organ in relation to the Syrian crisis is due to the constant clash between countries among the P5, in which Russia and China guide their behavior by more assertive and unfavorable positions on direct interventions that may modify the maintenance of the current order that is favorable to them. On the other hand, the United States and the other permanent countries seek operational means to legitimize interventions based on biased interests to their own external agendas. The Security Council thus faces skepticism on part of the international community about its ability to respond to the growing challenge to global security posed by the Syrian crisis, particularly in view of the evident involvement of a multiplicity of non-state actors by means of organized crime, the articulation of militia groups and terrorist organizations (Einsiedel, Malone and Ugarte 2015).

Interventions in sovereign states in situation of security vulnerability carried out by the Security Council present high costs, not only in financial terms, but also considering political aspects in the international community, especially regarding the legitimacy of such operations. Thus, the political cost of executing a forceful intervention in a sovereign territory, because it is extremely high, must be sustained by the consent of the international community. The intervention, therefore, to be useful in its political character and to be taken as satisfactory must be in accordance with the objectives set by the states and other parties involved, besides being carried out by means that these actors consider legitimate (Finnemore 2003). The fact that the parties most directly involved in the issue of the Syrian conflict within the Security Council - that is, its member countries - disagree about the implementation of
an intervention implies that any attempt to operate on Syrian territory is not made with legitimate instruments, but also loses its political consent before the international community. In this way, the Security Council is prevented from acting to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The criteria for the positioning of the great security powers vary according to the powers of the economic, geopolitical, strategic and military order, so that they date back decades, since the international system presented a different conformation from that of the present day. Thus the past conjectures have been perpetuated and adapted to the present arrangements, so that there is still a dichotomy between the United States and Russia through the propagation of its interests in the Syrian conflict and other sensitive aspects concerning the situation in the Middle East region (Arraes 2014). Moreover, the individual positions of the nations in question interfere not only with the strategic conduct of the conflict on and around Syrian territory, but rather with the discussions in the Security Council. As a consequence, the deliberative activities of the organ become more stagnant and less efficient, due to the political clash between the players that have veto power and, with considerable frequency, seize the decisions of each other, if it is an affront - direct or indirect - to their aspirations in the region in dispute.

Conclusions

The Security Council, through R2P, has the responsibility to ensure the protection of vulnerable populations in situations of human rights violations and mass atrocities (Stark 2011), as is the case in the civil war in Syria. However, decision-making deadlocks between Security Council countries - especially among the permanent members holding veto power - make it impossible for the UN to take action on the Syrian civil war, making the UN action in the situation in question not successful in ensuring the establishment of a peaceful order.

It is possible to observe a polarization among the permanent members of the United Nations’ highest security sphere, so that obstacles to joint action are placed by frequent vetoes and impasses in the middle of the discussions. On the one hand, China and Russia argue that the other permanent members of the Security Council use the R2P doctrine to justify various tendentious interventions motivated by their national interests in relation to Syria. Thus, the use of force by legitimate means through the operations the Security Council carried out on Syrian territory may correspond to the strategies formulated by these countries to overthrow the Assad government, and consequently to promote the establishment of a Syrian internal regime more
aligned with their interests. Therefore, the observance of American political, economic and military aspirations in this region is guaranteed (Einsiedel, Malone and Ugarte 2015).

The reverse logic, however, is also possible. There is a claim on the part of the United States and its allies, France and the United Kingdom, that the impediments on the resolutions based on R2P pointed by China and Russia, regarding direct interventions in the Syrian conflict, reflect the objective of maintaining the Syrian nation under the administration of Assad. In this way, it is guarantees Russia’s affinity for the current power structures that keep its strategic interests in this part of the globe (Medzhihorsky, Popovic and Jenne 2017).

Therefore, the result of the deadlocks in the discussions in the scope of the Security Council is the lack of satisfactory performance of the organ in the resolution of the conflict in question. Thus, the United Nations fails to provide the necessary protection to the Syrian population in a state of vulnerability, and there is no stable political structure to support Syrian governability. The civil war in Syria, therefore, will extend without the prospect of a cease of hostilities until the international community is able to demonstrate intentions of a more direct and pacifying involvement. This scenario will also be possible based on the confluence of the interests of the nations with decision-making power on highly securitized matters and the cooperation among external actors, in order to achieve stability in the region.

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de maio de 2017.


ABSTRACT
The Security Council, responsible for maintaining a peaceful global order, promotes the discussion and implementation of conflict resolution measures that represent threats to international security. The present work demonstrates that the impasses and conflicts of interest between its permanent member countries in the case of the Syrian civil war resulted in the lack of direct action of the organ and its inability to solve the humanitarian crisis in question.

KEYWORDS
Security Council, Conflict, Syria.

Received on August 30, 2017.
Approved on February 15, 2018.
Translated by Bruna Hayashi Dalcin