

**Forum:** Committee Special Conference 1

**Issue:** Towards a global plan of action to safeguard national heritage in a time of war

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## Introduction

In the crucible of conflict, where the echoes of history reverberate through the corridors of time, our shared cultural heritage stands as a testament to the resilience of humanity and a world as whole. As the shadow of war cast an ominous pall over our and the world's history. The need for a plan or action to safeguard national heritage. However the understanding of national heritage needs to be known first. Oxford Dictionary defines national heritage as “Items of historical or cultural significance handed down from generation to generation of a nation as a whole. However the list below introduces the different types of nations' heritage.

National heritage can be divided into different categories,

- Cultural heritage which connects to a nation's culture
  - Immovable cultural heritage such as monuments and archeological sites; these could be Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Pyramids in Egypt, and any monument or site with historic importance
  - Movable cultural heritage as in artifacts like the Rosetta Stone, the sculpture of David or the Mona Lisa that can be found in museums such as the Louvre in Paris France or the British Museum
  - Intangible cultural heritage such as traditional festivals like Diwali in India or Carnival in Brazil.
- Natural heritage is related to any natural formations.
  - National parks for example Yellowstone in the United States or Serengeti National Park in Tanzania.
  - UNESCO Biosphere Reserves for example the Galapagos Islands or Mount Athos in Greece.
  - Unique landscapes e.g. the Great Barrier Reef in Australia or the Amazon rainforest in South America.
- Historical heritage
  - Ancient Civilizations e.g. Mesopotamia in modern day Iraq, Indus Valley Civilization in Pakistan and India, Revolutionary sites e.g. the Independence Hall in the United States or

the Bastille in France.

- Intangible heritage
  - Cuisine e.g. Italia, Japanese, Thai, Indian, and Mexican.
  - Traditional music e.g. Flamenco in Spain, Samba in Brazil, and Hula in Hawaii.
- Architectural Heritage
  - Historic buildings like Taj Mahal in India, the Colosseum in Rome Italy, and the Sydney Opera House in Australia.
  - Traditional housing like Kyoto's Machiya in Japan, Moroccan Riads, and Greek Cycladic architecture.

All these sites of heritage for a nation can be destroyed during times of war which can make nations lose their heritage, both during and at the end of a war.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Cultural heritage

The legacy of physical artifacts (cultural property) and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from the past. By making sure that a nation is able to sustainably pass their heritage for generations to come.

### Heritage Preservation

Heritage preservation is the actions or processes that are aimed at safeguarding the character-defining elements of a cultural resource so as to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life.

### Cultural Property

Cultural property which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by each State as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art or science. It is a property with a key cultural impact on the state.

### UNESCO

UNESCO means United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. And their aim is to work toward ensuring that every child and every citizen has access to quality education. By promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures.

### Looting

Looting refers to the unauthorized removal, theft, or pillaging of cultural artifacts, archaeological finds, or valuable objects from their original locations, often during times of conflict or unrest.

### Cultural Property Protection Officer

Cultural Property Protection Officers are individuals, often within military forces, who are trained to safeguard cultural heritage during armed conflicts. They work to prevent damage, looting, and

destruction of cultural property.

### Safe Zones

Safe zones are designated areas where protection is provided to civilians, humanitarian activities, and cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The creation of safe zones aims to minimize the impact of war on vulnerable populations and important cultural sites.

### Emergency Preparedness and Response

Emergency preparedness and response involve the development of plans and strategies to anticipate, mitigate, and respond to potential threats or damage to cultural heritage during emergencies, including armed conflicts.

### Cultural Diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy is the use of cultural exchange, cultural heritage, and cultural activities as a means to foster understanding, dialogue, and collaboration between different cultures, nations, or communities, often in the context of international relations.

### Restitution

Restitution refers to the return of cultural artifacts or property to their country of origin, especially when such items have been unlawfully removed, stolen, or acquired through illicit means.

### Ceasefire

A ceasefire is a temporary suspension of hostilities or armed conflict between opposing forces. Ceasefires may be negotiated to allow for humanitarian activities, evacuation of civilians, or protection of cultural heritage.

### Cultural Genocide

Cultural genocide is the systematic destruction of traditions, values, language, and other elements that make one group of people distinct from another.

## Background Information

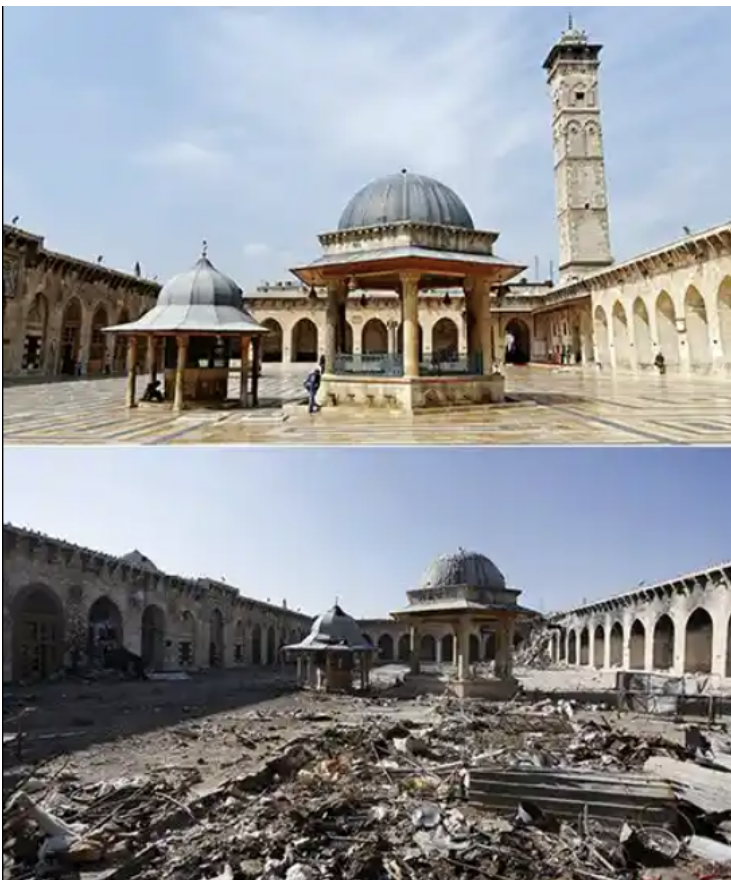
After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the United Nations was founded. The five permanent members of the United Nations were the USA, UK, France, China, and the Soviet Union. The goal was to restore international relations. Shortly after that, the UN formed a specialized agency called UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences, and culture with a focus on rebuilding schools, libraries, and museums that had been destroyed during World War II. In the 21st century, UNESCO plays a crucial role in providing technical assistance and enhancing the capacity of stakeholders engaged in the preservation of cultural heritage.

UNESCO's efforts involve offering support and expertise to individuals, organizations, and communities involved in heritage conservation efforts, thereby contributing to the safeguarding and

promotion of cultural treasures around the world. It supports projects that enhance effective and equitable protection and management of World Heritage for the benefit of current and future generations (UNESCO).

However, over the years, national heritage wasn't always able to be prevented from destruction. A recent example: Since 2011, the city of Damascus in Syria has been in a civil war with the pro-government forces supporting Bashar al-Assad and the opposition against him. The result of this is the destruction of the oldest inhabited city throughout history in the world (UNESCO). Its first inhabitants were in the 3rd millennium B.C. However, due to the civil conflict, it made Syria lose a key part of its heritage. This has lost part of a war that made part of history disappear.

UNESCO as an organization has made efforts to solve issues. UNESCO and governments document everything to ensure the rebuild and help identify endangered areas of a nation. UNESCO establishes safe buffers around important heritage sites during war for their protections. Considering it is a neutral organization and an NGO, this ensures that any armed conflicts or oppositions don't attack the heritage sites. UNESCO has worked a lot in Syria; they have five other heritage sites in Syria which are Krak des Chevaliers, Qal'at Salah el-Din, Borsa, Aleppo, and Palmyra, and the Northern Villages of Syria (Spiers). If these sites aren't safely guarded, cultural, historic, intangible, natural, and architectural heritage have all been damaged due to the civil war happening.



In the picture below, the Umayyad Mosque was built between 705 and 715 C.E. by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid. It is one of the largest mosques in the world, and people would pray in it and use it for religious reasons. However, due to the civil war, it has been destroyed in ruins and is not usable. This was part of their culture and heritage and was there for so long; however, due to armed conflicts, it is destroyed. What can be fixed by following through UNESCO resolutions like the 1954 signed in the Hague and later on in 1999. Spread local information to people in the local community to be aware of their heritage and how to protect it. Make treaties be followed through due to the fact that nations like the USA have broken the 1999

Second Protocol to the Hague Convention by stealing a significant amount of artifacts from the Iraq

museums and these pieces of history dating back to Mesopotamia.

The Syrian government like many other government's have broken the treaties stated further down. Like the 1999 Hague convention which states that no armed conflicts should destroy culture they signed it didn't ratify the agreement which shows their intent to agree with the treaty(Albro) However since the civil war their have been multiple ancient cities like damascus,aleppo and paylamar destroyed .The ancient city off Palmyra in 2015 and 2017 the terrorist group ISIS destroyed multiple historic artifacts and treasures by 2019 is able to open.(Coscone). However this was an example of why the conventions/treaties need to be put into action . This city was Syria's only heritage; it is part of the world heritage and existed since the 3rd millennium ("Palmyra")..In the picture you can see palmyra before and after



The heritage of nations can be stolen in the form of artifacts. A famous example of this is the 2003 situation following the US invasion of Iraq. Various archaeological sites and museums have been looted, including the ancient cities of Adab, Hatra and Isin. The most prominent among them being the Iraq Museum where as much as 170,000 items were looted, including the 5,000 year old statues. In addition, several sites such as Babylon saw the destruction of its archaeology-rich subsoil as a result of military planning.(George). Also Iraq has had other instances off national heritage being destroyed. During the civil war that followed the 2003 invasion, several historical sites were destroyed by various groups. In 2006 and 2007, Al-Askari Mosque was bombed by Sunni militants twice in the course of two years. In 2006, the Minaret of Anah and the statue of Al-Mansur were bombed by Shia militants and destroyed. All the aforementioned buildings were later reconstructed.(George). A solution for this incident is to have better security to prevent other instances like this from happening again. Enforcing

the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The treaty was made so these situations don't happen and holding nations accountable to this.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Syria

Since 2011 the Syrian civil war has been ongoing. With a civil war the destruction of its heritage came cities like Damascus, Aleppo and Palmyra have all been destroyed or severely damaged. This is due to the government not fully caring about its heritage due to the fact they have been fighting a civil war since 2011. With funding mainly used to fight government oppositions so there wasn't any funding into the nation's preservation of its heritage. With the destruction a lot of the intangible heritage is lost in history because of the destruction. Syria is a nation with rich history and has existed for ages but its identity has changed significantly from a beautiful country in the Middle East with history to a country that destroyed its own heritage. Syria has worked with UNESCO and let them set up 5 heritage sites due to the ongoing civil war since 2011. UNESCO has helped the reconstruction of Palmyra after ISIS damaged parts of Palmyra.

### Iraq

Iraq's cultural heritage has been steadily diminishing from the early 1990s to the present day. With the loss of their national museum and losing over 100,000 artifacts, statues that go back to Mesopotamia in 2003 by militant groups who looted the museum. This was a move by the United States who allied with the United States during its invasion of Iraq. With the Iraqi government neglecting the care that is needed which made it vulnerable due to a lack of funding so looting like what the militant groups did in 2003 were easy. It is a vital part of its history; they have Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Parthian cultures.

### UNESCO

As UNESCO being part of the UN a promotion is peace and international relationships. UNESCO's primary mission is to safeguard the cultural heritage of nations, preventing the loss or destruction of valuable treasures worldwide. A notable example where UNESCO intervened in the aftermath of ISIS destroying significant areas of the ancient city of Palmyra. In response to such threats, UNESCO established 2 different conventions to solve the topic at hand. These are the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict it was updated in 1999. UNESCO has made multiple attempts to make sure that nations' heritage is not going to die out there could be any of the types of heritage. In 1972 UNESCO made the World Heritage Convention to protect exceptional cultural and natural heritage sites around the world. These sites, inscribed on the World Heritage List, are considered of outstanding universal value and are subject to enhanced protection measures, including monitoring, international assistance, and emergency interventions. With the 2003 convention to safeguard heritage the convention aims to protect traditional knowledge, oral

traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and knowledge systems that are passed down through generations.

## Afghanistan

With Afghanistan's devastating civil war they have lost part of their culture. These irreplaceable treasures, spanning millennia of human history, have been damaged or destroyed by shelling, airstrikes, deliberate targeting, and looting. Among the most notorious examples are the Bamiyan Buddhas. These monumental statues, carved into the cliffs of Bamiyan province, were symbols of Afghanistan's ancient Buddhist heritage and were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1988. In 2001, the Taliban, under the pretext of eliminating idolatry, ordered the destruction of the statues, reducing them to rubble (Foliot). This has shifted the public's vision of Afghanistan as a whole from a nation whose democratic leader was overthrown and is being run by the Taliban. Instead of being a nation with rich cultural heritage and ancient cities.

## Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description
1954	Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict	First ever treaty that was making sure that a nation's heritage won't suffer during war and prohibiting the destruction of cultural property
2003	Looting of Iraq National Museum	Around 600,000 archaeological pieces from Iraq National Museum by militant groups allied with United States
2005	UNESCO's Emergency Response Actions	Establishment of UNESCO's Emergency Response Actions (ERA) to address the destruction and looting of cultural heritage during crises. This focuses on rapid response, risk reduction, and recovery efforts.
2011	Destruction of Palmyra	UNESCO World Heritage Site which is an ancient city, faced extensive damage/destruction during the Syrian Civil War. The event highlighted the deliberate targeting of cultural heritage by militant groups.
2012	Mali Cultural Heritage Sites at Risk	With armed conflicts in Mali led to several heritage sites at risk. Timbuktu's mausoleums. International efforts were made to protect and preserve these sites.
2015	2015: United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199	The UN Security Council aimed to end the illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts and antiquities, recognizing the role of such trafficking in funding terrorist activities during conflicts.

2016	2016: Palmyra's Liberation and Restoration	Palmyra the ancient city in Syria was destroyed by ISIS in 2015 and is slowly rebuilding the destroyed artifacts and buildings
2019	2019: Notre-Dame Cathedral Fire:	The fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris highlighted the vulnerability of iconic cultural landmarks. International support and pledges for the cathedral's restoration followed.
2020	Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Heritage Concerns	With rising conflicts with Armenia and Azerbaijan concerns on cultural heritage sites, including churches, monasteries, and historical monuments in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
2020	Lebanon's Cultural Heritage After Beirut Explosion	After the explosion in docks off Beirut the impact on off that worries about cultural heritage, including historic buildings, museums, and artifacts. International support was mobilized for recovery efforts.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

### Treaties

1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict: this was a treaty by UNESCO and was the first ever real treaty to make sure that nations' heritage wasn't destroyed. Some key elements of it were Refraining from acts of hostility directed against cultural property; Taking steps to safeguard cultural property from damage or destruction; Prohibiting the export, removal, or transfer of ownership of cultural property; and Providing international assistance for the protection of cultural property. (UNESCO)

1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions: these protocols were based on the 1954 Hague Convention to provide further protection of cultural heritage during times of war. Some specific protocols were the protection of cultural property in occupied territories and on the return of cultural property that has been removed from its country of origin. (IHL)

1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention: This is an updated version of the 1954 Hague Convention with updates by extending its scope to cover non-international armed conflicts so it could also happen with civil wars. It also includes several new provisions by require states to cooperate in cultural protection of cultural property and prohibit the use of cultural property for military purposes. (UNESCO)



## Events

2003 World Conference on Cultural Property Protection and Armed Conflict: this was a conference held in the Hague and brought nations representatives from governments and international organizations. This event was able to discuss the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict. The conference was able to strengthen the legal framework for the protection of cultural property and called for an increase in cooperation on this topic. ("Resolution 2139")

2013 Resolution 2139 of the United Nations Security Council: The resolution was adopted by the United Nations Security Council to the destruction of cultural heritage due to extremist destruction of cultural property. The resolution condemns the destruction of cultural heritage and calls for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts. ("Resolution 2139").

In 2017 Unesco and the international committee of red cross partners for the Blue Shield initiative. Its aim is to strengthen the protection of cultural property during any armed conflict. The blue shield initiative provides training and resources to military and civilian personnel on the protection of cultural property and raises awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Through the years there have been attempts at making sure nations' heritage are safe and able to pass down through generations. The blue shield initiative was designed to help Syrian specialists in safeguarding cultural heritage from being damaged or looted in its ongoing civil war. Even before UNESCO and the UN there was a group of artists, art dealers, art historians, museum curators. Had a mission and the mission was to rescue and repatriate any artifacts, art, statues or any pieces of heritage that the nazi took when invading other european nations. Another attempt at solving the issue was after the BOSNIA war which spanned from 1992 to 1995 (Galloway's). The UN security council made the The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) prosecuted individuals responsible for the destruction of cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a response off the war it lasted from 1993 to 2017 (International Criminal). Their aim was to prosecute individuals or groups who damaged or destroyed any cultural property which affected the cultural heritage in the 1990s in the balkan region.

## Possible Solutions

Post-conflict plans/recovery of nations' heritage after a war civil or global. On how to rebuild a heritage site after war. If it was a historic site like the Great Wall of China it is made out of bricks and cut stone blocks(10 Things). By figuring out how they were made, repeat the process and reconstruct the areas that are damaged. This won't be natural heritage because you can re-shape a mountain if it is destroyed but you can grow more trees in a nation so there are limitations.

Increase international relations by making agreements or cooperating with nations. This will give nations an understanding of what not to destroy if there is a war. These nations build relations and make peace. Or advocate for and participate in international treaties/resolutions, even conventions, such as the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its protocols. Promote and adhere to these agreements among involved parties.

Allow for safe zones or ceasefires to allow the evacuation of citizens in that area for their safety and the safety of the heritage to ensure it will be passed on to the next generations. Like NGOs there are certain areas that take no political side so having heritage sites that are Culturally, historically, Architecturally, intangible, and naturally important for a nation's heritage.

### **Protection vs. reservation: Balancing national security and cultural Heritage**

The need to protect national security during wartime and the preservation of cultural heritage. How can nations strike a balance between safeguarding important cultural sites and artifacts while ensuring the safety of their citizens? It will be important to hear member states who had their country invaded or have been robbed nations like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and bring up historical events and conventions after wars. After all of the historical events have resolution or treaties an example could be a third Hague convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

### **Need for an organization during a time of war**

Organizations like UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), to safeguard national heritage during times of war. How effective are current international frameworks like the 1954 and the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention in preventing the destruction of culture + heritage? Since the second world war Should there be increased cooperation and coordination among nations to ensure the protection of shared global heritage? To tie back to historical experiences and how organizations work effectively or not and give NGOs a good debate theme.

### **Reconstruction and rehabilitation of heritage sites post-conflict**

Discuss strategies for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of cultural heritage sites in the aftermath of war. How can nations collaborate to restore damaged or destroyed heritage sites? What financial and logistical challenges are involved, and what role can the international community play in supporting these efforts? Consider the importance of cultural diplomacy in rebuilding relationships and fostering post-conflict reconciliation through the restoration of shared heritage. What is any compensation

that nations can provide after the destruction of nations' sites that have heritage, are used for religious purposes or have significance with the culture of the nation?

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