

**Forum:** General Assembly 3 (Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian)

**Issue:** Measures to Protect World Heritage Sites in Areas of Conflict

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## Introduction

Whilst the protection of world heritage sites in times of conflict is often seen as superficial, and almost irrelevant compared to myriad issues generated by violence, its destruction reveals darker underlying problems that are often overlooked when we discuss the costs of war. In contrast issues on the warfront such as the violation of human rights, which is a standalone problem in itself, the destruction of heritage sites is instead a factor within many – if not all of the issues faced in conflict zones today. When discussing cultural heritage, not only is it the destruction of the tangible identity of cultures, it also serves as red flags for issues such as genocide and ethnic cleansing - where destruction of tangible culture and history of various groups precede the destruction of the groups themselves. Issues such as trafficking of artefacts from these sites also surface, and become increasingly relevant. Without the necessary protection of these sites, the revenue generated from stolen artefacts contribute significantly to the finances of terrorist organisations, facilitating their expansion and by extension, the many atrocities committed by these groups.

As an issue in itself, it takes away the identity of communities – making it both a target for terrorist attacks, as well as forces groups apart, and discouraging them to come together after the war. In essence, the destruction of tangible culture is also the destruction of communities, and can severely impact upon a culture as a whole. When symbols of identity are taken away, identity itself becomes diluted.

In addition to the problems faced by the destruction of cultural heritage, the destruction of natural heritage reveals another side of warfare that has yet to be addressed. Although less at risk from direct attacks and destruction than cultural sites, natural heritage sites also face consequences during war. Such sites are often of significant ecological or scientific value, and the presence of warfare in these areas may significantly upset the balance of the ecosystem and deplete resources in the environment. As a result, it generates many serious environmental issues.

When sites are not protected or observed, we turn a blind eye to the potential signs of genocide or ethnic cleansing, to the destruction of the environment, and the funding of terrorist groups. This is an issue that is complex and multifaceted, and whose solution will involve protective measures in all areas it

affects, whether it be political, social, or economic. In order to solve this issue, delegates will need to systematically address the many other problems that occur directly as a result of it, and its position as a factor within a larger problem.

## Definition of Key Terms

### World Heritage Site

A world heritage site is a site nominated and designated by UNESCO under the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage for possessing outstanding international importance and therefore deserving of the special protection awarded to it under the convention. Sites identified are generally one which are considered to have 'universal' importance to humans, whether this be because it contains invaluable cultural and historical information, or for its scientific value and ecological importance – in the case of natural sites.

### Conflict Zone

A conflict zone is defined as a region where conflict or unrest is occurring. As of now, there are currently four major ongoing conflicts, defined as resulting in more than 10,000 violent deaths a year. A large majority of these wars are internal conflicts, fought by various parties within a nation. Conflict zones are often rife with insecurities, with very little infrastructure providing needs to civilians, or to carry out protective measures.

### Cultural Cleansing

Cultural cleansing is defined as the eradication of cultural artefacts, such as books, artwork, or structures, and the suppression of cultural activities which do not fall in line with the destroyer's notion of what is appropriate. Cultural cleansing can often be seen in the purposeful destruction of heritage sites, and has been considered a red flag to many issues such as genocide or ethnic cleansing.

## Background Information

### Convention and background

The World Heritage Convention of 1972 is the centrepiece legislation governing the UNESCO World Heritage program. The objectives of the convention can be generalised into the strategic goals of the 5 C's - Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-Building, Communication, and Communities. The convention looks towards the sustainable preservation of sites which hold a 'universal' value to mankind. An important feature of the document is that it identifies the link between the concepts of nature conservation, and the conservation of cultural properties. It recognises natural sites as a part of heritage, due to the way people interact and shape their cultures around nature. There is thus the fundamental

need to preserve the balance between the two - such that both the cultural and natural aspects of world heritage can be recognised.

The decision to draft the World Heritage Convention of 1972 was catalysed by the building of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt. The building of the dam would effectively flood the valley containing Abu Simbel Temples, which were invaluable to Egyptian civilisation. In 1959, after an appeal from Egypt and Sudan, UNESCO launched an international safeguarding campaign. The campaign accelerated archaeological research in the area, and also disassembled the Abu Simbel and Philae temples so that they could be moved to dry ground and rebuilt. The total cost of the campaign was approximately USD80 million, with contributions from various nations. This support showed how nations recognised the responsibility of the international community in preserving heritage. The success of this campaign launched other programs in Venice (Italy), the Ruis at Moenjodaro (Pakistan), and the Borobodur Temple Compounds (Indonesia). In search of a uniform framework to further carry out these protection campaigns, UNESCO along with the help of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) prepared a draft convention which is now known as the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

The convention outlines the responsibility of state parties in identifying potential sites and in addition, recognising their role in protecting and preserving them. By ratifying the convention, the country pledges to preserve both world heritage and national heritage sites. The convention also details how the World Heritage Fund may be used for financial aid and assistance, and conditions for providing such. However, whilst only countries which have ratified the convention may name sites under the UNESCO program, it should be noted that countries which have not ratified the convention may still have heritage worth preserving.

### ***Nomination process***

In order to nominate a World Heritage Site, a country must first compile all significant ethical and natural properties they wish to consider into a list known as the Tentative List. Only properties on the Tentative List may become a world heritage site. This list is reviewed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. These two organisations then make recommendations to the World Heritage Committee who has the final decision. For both natural and cultural heritage sites, there are ten selection criteria and a site must meet at least one of them to be included.

#### **Cultural Criteria**

- I. "represents a masterpiece of human creative genius and cultural significance"
- II. "exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time, or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning, or landscape design"
- III. "to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared"

IV.	"is an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural, or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history"
V.	"is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture, or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change"
VI.	"is directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance"
<b>Natural Criteria</b>	
I.	"contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance"
II.	"is an outstanding example representing major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features"
III.	"is an outstanding example representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems, and communities of plants and animals"
IV.	"contains the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation"

**Caption #1: Table to show the selection criteria for World Heritage Sites**

## Heritage in danger

The List of World Heritage in Danger compiles sites which are threatened by imminent or potential dangers. It is compiled by UNESCO through the World Heritage Committee, as outlined in Article 11.4 in the World Heritage Convention. A site in danger is defined as "threatened world heritage sites for the conservation of which major operations are required and for which assistance has been requested". Threats to sites can be described as imminent or potential dangers. Imminent threats include significant loss of historical authenticity, serious deterioration of materials, severe deterioration of natural beauty or scientific value, and decline in the population of endangered species. Potential threats include the lack of a conservation policy, impacts of climate and environmental factors, threatening effects of urbanisation, and armed conflict. With the escalation of conflicts in the modern era, the latter factor has become more a more important threat to heritage sites in or near conflict zones. Such areas include countries such as Syria, Libya, Niger, and Yemen.

## The immediate effects of modern conflict

Modern conflict poses one of the greatest threats to heritage sites in the affected region. In natural heritage sites, it can deplete resources and damage the local ecosystem, and in cultural heritage sites, it can be used as targets or destroyed in order to erase unwanted beliefs. The scale of damage to a site can be affected by a number of factors, such as the type of heritage site, agendas of military forces

occupying the area, and whether damage done is intentional or unintentional. The latter factor mentioned is extremely important, because the intentional damage of heritage sites can be considered a war crime under the International Criminal Court. The intentional destruction and damage against a particular population or memory, history, and art can be referred to as 'cultural cleansing'. These acts not only affect the area, but also are detriments to humanity as a whole - as cultural heritage has long been cited as a part of humankind's common history. It should also be noted that acts of 'cultural cleansing' often precedes genocide, ethnic cleansing, and persecution of certain demographics. They are thus red flags for these crimes against humanity. An example of this can be seen during the Iraq war where alongside the looting of museums and damage to intellectual property, there was also an exodus of academics and intellectuals from the country. With almost 80% of professors vacating the nation, it is enough to suggest that intellectuals were being persecuted. Artefact looting also poses a serious problem. In Syria and Iraq, such crimes occur at an industrial scale. The destruction of sites in order to obtain these artefacts and antiques perpetrated by militant groups feed into organised crime networks, and can be a key source of revenue for these groups.

### **The indirect effects of modern conflict**

Sometimes, the destruction of sites is not directly attributed to conflict but rather stems from the issues that conflict leaves behind. In a post-conflict society, it should be noted that many institutions are not yet stable, and issues such as the overconsumption of resources, or the illegal occupation of these sites become a secondary priority compared with the other challenges a nation has to face. Without governmental regulations, sites can also be at greater risk from looting and trafficking of artefacts - an activity that many impoverished groups may engage in to earn revenue in an unstable post-war society. Thus, for sites that have survived the conflict, threats of deterioration and damage still exist, and effective methods must be developed such that heritage sites may survive the post-war reconstruction period.

### **The immediate context**

The immediate context is a situation where numerous sites are endangered due to increasing world threats and instabilities. Conflict in the middle east and Northern Africa threaten to destroy the heritage sites of significant historical value - stemming particularly from the close cultural ties in civilisations around the Mediterranean. Fighting in Syria has threatened sites with influences from Aramaic, Arabic, and Greco-Roman ties. In Libya, the civil war, ISIS and struggle for territory has forced UNESCO to place all five of its heritage sites on the endangered list. UNESCO has also initiated emergency actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Mali, and Syria.

## **Key Issues**

## Cultural heritage sites

Conflict has a profound effect upon societies. In addition to the immediate problems - such as the perpetration of war crimes and the destruction of infrastructure, cultural heritage is often destroyed, whether as collateral damage or with clear intention. Cultural heritage is essential in the representation of a community - it reflects the life of the community, and its history. By removing markers of a community's identity, it discourages survivors of the conflict to come together again after the violence. Although cultural heritage can exist as intangible forms - such as values and traditions - it can also exist as tangible structures and monuments. Thus the destruction of heritage sites during conflict can be seen as the destruction of key parts of many cultures.

### *Loss of cultural ties and significance*

One of the core ideals of the World Heritage Convention is to create unity among the people by identifying the certain outstanding aspects of their heritage that are 'universal' to mankind. Thus it should be noted that whilst cultural heritage can be detrimental to a community, it can also be detrimental to the collective memory of mankind as a whole.

In times of conflict, cultural identity and cultural heritage become more important to groups suffering from wartime issues. It represents a belief and a faith they can hold on to during a difficult period. This often makes such sites a target for extremist groups, whether it is to make a statement, or to eradicate historical evidence of certain beliefs, and effectively seek to \_\_\_\_\_ a culture as much as possible. An example can be seen in the Taliban destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. Located in Afghanistan, the two Buddhas statues were considered the largest in the world, and dated back approximately 1700 years. They were inevitably destroyed by Taliban forces using dynamite, anti-aircraft guns and artillery. Taliban Leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, addressing the issue, was quoted to have said "We do admit the relics were the cultural heritage of Afghanistan, but the parts that contradict our beliefs we would not like to have them anymore."

Cultural heritage sites reinforce cultural identity. They represent the values of a community, as well its historic and cultural roots. A key part of the problem is that it is tangible evidence of a culture in an era where foreign influences threaten its existence. In an era of increased globalisation, it is often the case that many communities become wary of foreigners, for fear that their cultural identity may be lost. When sites are destroyed during conflict, it reinforces this fear, and creates an isolated community which may be wary of outsiders. This can have a lasting impact when rebuilding a nation after a war has ended.

### *Cultural cleansing and the persecution of minorities*

Cultural cleansing is defined as practice involving "the eradication of cultural artefacts, such as books, artworks, and structures, and cultural activities that do not conform to the

destroyer's notion of what is appropriate". Cultural cleansing is closely tied with cultural homogenization, and is a part of the continuum of cultural homogenization, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

In the modern era, there have been multiple examples of states forcing citizens to conform to common cultural standards and patterns. As a result, it establishes congruence and order in a society, and erases the ethnic and political boundaries in a society. However, this is often accompanied by the cultural cleansing of beliefs or symbols of beliefs which do not conform, and can be considered a form of radical homogenisation. In addition to this, cultural cleansing often precedes the persecution of minorities - whether through ethnic cleansing or genocide. When a group seeks to rid a community of certain beliefs, the persecution of people under this belief often follows the destruction of tangible evidence of it. The United Nations has thus noted it as a risk factor for impending genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

An example of this can be seen in the Bosnian Genocide and ethnic cleansing that occurred from 1992-1995, during the Bosnian War. When Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, the majority of the people were Bosnian Muslims - accounting for 41% of the population. Serbs made up a further 31%, and Croats for 17%. Elections held late 1990 emerged with a coalition government comprised of three parties, based loosely off the three ethnicities and led by Bosnian Alija Izetbegovic. As tensions build within the country, the Serbian Democratic Party led by Radovan Karadzic withdraws and sets up the Serbian National Assembly. Two days after President Izetbegovic declares independence, Bosnian Serb forces with the backing of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army attacks the capital Sarajevo. This was to be the beginning of an escalated conflict, which brought about the horrors of the Bosnian Genocide.

One of the main targets during the invasion were Bosnian Muslims and symbols of their religion and heritage. In major cities such as Sarajevo and Mostar, sites with historical proof of the country's pluralist identity was destroyed, including libraries, archives, and museums. Additionally, minarets and mosques were destroyed in many Muslim-dominated cities, to such an extent that the Mayor of the Serb-held and once Muslim-dominated town of Zvornik, was able to claim that "there were any mosques in Zvornik". The destruction of tangible evidence of heritage occurred simultaneously with 'ethnic cleansing' and the expulsion, imprisonment, torture, and abuse of Bosnian Muslims. Ultimately, ethnic cleansing turned into explicit genocide when the UN-declared 'safe havens' of Srebrenica was overwhelmed by Serb forces. Women and children were captured and sent into Bosnian Serb territory, whilst the men were killed immediately or sent to killing sites.

### *Trafficking of artefacts*

The trafficking of artefacts are often used to finance many illicit activities - and additionally is an illicit activity in itself. It occurs at an industry scale - and according to UNESCO, smuggled

artefacts account for an annual revenue of approximately \$2.2 billion. Not only does the trafficking of artefacts from protected heritage sites destroy its cultural and historical integrity, but additionally it also facilitates other crimes. In Syria and Iraq, the ISIS operated antique trafficking trade is valued at millions of dollars, and the revenue generated is believed to be the second-largest source of financing for the militant group, after oil. In Iraq, ISIS controls more than 4500 archaeological sites, and additionally, the group's advances in Libya places the country's already endangered sites at greater risk. All five of Libya's World Heritage Sites are already on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger - one of which is among the world's best preserved roman cities, Leptis Magna.

### Natural heritage sites

Natural Heritage Sites are often less threatened than cultural heritage sites, as they are often less obvious targets during times of conflict, and thus are rarely directly threatened. Nonetheless, they can often succumb to other forms of destruction during the war, and when threats arise, it is important to consider how they can be protected. Natural heritage sites often contain many endangered species which may perish due to the effects of conflict. Conflict depletes resources from an environment, and can upset the ecological balance of an area with additional human intervention. This can destroy the scientific value of a site - especially in regards to the information it can offer about a particular species or the ecosystem. An example can be seen in the Air Mountains in Niger - which extend over an area of 84000 square kilometers, and to a height of 1800m. It has been placed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger as military conflict and civil disturbances in the area have resulted in a reduction of wildlife population and vegetation cover.

### Case study: Syrian heritage in danger

Syria is a country of rich cultural and historical origins. It's capital city is among one of the oldest continuously-inhabited in the world, and has been home to some of the greatest civilisations in history. Since unrest in Syria began five years ago during the Arab Springs of 2011, the situation has escalated from protests against Bashar Al-Assad to a proxy war of immeasurable severity and scale. It has also sparked a humanitarian disaster of extreme proportions - with 6.5 million people displaced, and 3 million refugees. Others remaining in the country suffer from poor conditions such as a shortage of food and drinking water.

Inevitably, the damage done to Syria's cultural and artistic history is arguably irreversible. Some heritage sites have been transformed into battlefields, and have been destroyed as a result of collateral damage. Illegal excavations and illicit trading of artefacts carried out by armed groups for revenue have also ravaged these sites. More alarming is the destruction of monuments in a manner that is premediated, systematic, and often occurring far from the frontlines. The destruction of monuments and community identity by ISIS have affected not only famed sites such as Palmyra and Nineveh, but also Yazidi temples, Sufi shrines, Shia hussainiyahs, Christian churches, and ancient monasteries - symbols

of community identity and culture. This presents a fundamental part of ethnic cleansing which characterises ISIS's expansion - where minorities which do not conform to the group's beliefs are persecuted and driven from their homes.

The six world heritage sites in Syria have been on the World Heritage in Danger list since June 2013. However, due to warfare and the limited access to these sites, it is unclear the extent to which these sites have been damaged and the state of these sites is still unclear. Looting has also been reported at museums, such as the Maarat al-Numan Museum and the Folk Museum at Aleppo.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Syria

In the past few years, Syria has been ravaged by a civil war that has been ever-growing in size and complexity. In addition to the many humanitarian issues that have been raised, Syria's cultural heritage has also been put increasingly at risk. The Islamic State of the Iraq and Syria has been a primary driver of this, and has been condemned for 'cultural cleansing' across both countries by UNESCO. In addition, all six of Syria's heritage sites have been damaged or destroyed during the civil war. Despite the responsibility of the Assad government to provide protection to such sites, the war has effectively destroyed many of the infrastructure required for the sites' protection, and has also placed a strain on government resources.

### Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has been condemned as one of the drivers of the destruction of heritage sites. Cultural cleansing has occurred in both of these countries, and in addition, there have also been incidents of ethnic cleansing where minorities and non-muslims have been targeted, killed, or driven out of their homes. Its expansive international reach has also placed heritage sites at risk in countries such as Libya, where it has also become involved as one of the parties in the nation's ongoing civil war.

### United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

UNESCO is the overseeing body of the World Heritage Site program, and is responsible for the implementation of the 1972 convention, the registration of sites onto the List of World Heritage in Danger, as well as the management of the World Heritage Fund. Within the program, it coordinates national and international efforts to prevent artefact trafficking, and mobilises international community for emergency actions when heritage is danger. It is responsible for numerous programs across regions facing conflicts and insecurities, with notable concern towards the escalating tensions in Iraq and Syria. In December 2014, UNESCO hosted a meeting discussing the links between cultural heritage

destruction and persecution of minority, cultural cleansing, and the protection of heritage sites in these two countries in the wake of ISIS's advances. It also focuses on the illicit trafficking of artefacts and has devised the Emergency Response Action Plan (ERAP) as a measure to combat this.

### International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

The International Council on Monuments and Sites is an international NGO dedicated to conserving heritage worldwide with particular regard to cultural heritage. It is an advisory body to UNESCO on the implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Founded in 1965, ICOMOS is an organisation comprised of professionals providing policy advice and information to other organisations and states in the program. It currently has 9500 members in 144 countries, 110 national committees, and 28 international scientific committees. It contributes to UNESCO's efforts in affected regions where world heritage is in danger, in partnership with the International Committee of the Blue Shield.

### International Committee of the Blue Shield

The blue shield emblem was created to identify cultural properties to be protected. Since it was founded in 1996, the International Committee of the Blue Shield has been one of the notable organisations in its field. The organisation helps implement blue shield provisions, programs, and actions, and gathers NGOs dealing with museums, archives, libraries, monuments, and sites to exchange knowledge and experience in order to coordinate efforts for emergency situations. The Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield was founded in 2008, and was developed to facilitate better communications with all levels of blue shield networks, promote peacekeeper training, and create database of specialists agreed upon by UNESCO.

### Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
May 14, 1954	The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is signed, and is the first UN document to provide protection to cultural property. Currently, has been ratified by 122 states, with 4 signatories remaining to do so.
November 16, 1972	The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is adopted by the general assembly, forming the centrepiece of all legislation regarding world heritage
	The Old Town Quarter in Dubrovnik - a World Heritage Site - is bombed by the

December 6, 1991	Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) during the Siege of Dubrovnik which lasted a total of seven months.
November 9, 1993	The World Heritage Site of Stari Most Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina is destroyed by Croat forces in the Croat-Bosniak War and has since been rebuilt.
October 24, 1996	The beginning of the First Congo War, which inevitably led to the deterioration of many World Heritage Sites through deforestation, poaching, and looting
March 26, 1999	The Second Protocol to the Hague Convention is adopted, calling for the reinforcement of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, provides protocol for jurisdictional and criminal procedures during times of conflict, and successfully establishes the Convention for Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict
May 2014	First reports of ISIS militants destroying cultural property emerge.
May 23, 2015	First accounts of ISIS militants destroying the World Heritage Site in Palmyra
August 17, 2015	The strategy for the reinforcement of the organisation's actions for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict, is submitted to the UNESCO executive board, outlining current progress and a proposed strategy for reinforcing the mentioned areas.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954
- The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972
- The Second Protocol to the Hague Convention, 1999
- Strategy for the reinforcement of the organisation's actions for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict, 2015

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Despite the efforts of many non-governmental organisations, and UNESCO in particular to combat the issue, many still question the effectiveness of current levels of protection afforded to world

heritage sites. In areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Mali, Iraq, and Syria, tremendous effort has been put forward to apply protective measures, however, have continued to yield poor results.

One of the issues that has surfaced has been the lack of an adequate sanctioning system outlined in the World Heritage Convention of 1972, to compel state parties to better implement provisions. An example of this can be seen in the excessive shelling of Old Aleppo in Syria, despite the Assad government having ratified the 1954 Hague Convention. It should be noted that damage in many of such situations result from collateral damage, and thus without states being compelled to provide additional protection to sites, many sites are affected by conflict.

UNESCO has also been criticised for its 'risk avoiding' attitude in regards to world heritage sites. It's current policy is one which is against sending military-based commissions to assess the damage and condition of the site. Criticism thus stems from UNESCO's limited ability to assess the current state of sites in conflict zones. In addition, the International Committee of the Blue Shield has been unable to interfere in these countries and provide peacekeeping provisions.

## Possible Solutions

It is understandable during war, resources are often distributed to other areas which may be in greater need of immediate assistance - such as human aid for example. However, this means that other areas are often neglected completely, leaving additional problems to fix in the aftermath of the war. In order to address this problem, a more comprehensive response framework for heritage site protection should be developed, and should be one which provides adequate protection but does not place a strain on resources that may be needed elsewhere.

A possible part of such a framework would be to consider implementing more effective sanctioning systems, and redesigning them to be of greater relevance to modern conflicts. Currently, a large majority of conflicts occurring around the world are in the form of internal disputes or civil wars. With the sanctioning system designed to hold the governing party accountable for damages done to heritage sites in a situation where the party's authority and governing right is being challenged, it is uncertain whether effective protection can be afforded to these sites. In addition, as the main focus of any group in conflict is the war itself and rarely the consequences of the war, countries may not see the protection of heritage as a main priority.

In addition to this, a mechanism which allows world heritage sites to be protected, or at the very least observed, should be in place. With the destruction of heritage as a red flag to potentially larger crimes, it is important that measures must be in place such that signs of destruction or intention of destruction can at least be recorded and used as an indicator of potentially larger crimes occurring. Resources should also go towards the general protection of sites, and a framework be set up so that

data and site protection assessments can be collected so that relevant organisations have access to the necessary information.

Deploying peacekeepers to protect the sites can also be seen as an option, however, it should be noted that this has remained a fairly controversial solution to protecting world heritage sites. Firstly, deploying peacekeepers to these sites put the peacekeepers themselves at risk, and brings up the debate of whether human lives should be put at risk to protect inanimate heritage sites. It also would be rendered ineffective in many areas, where the site remains in inaccessible territory,

Finally, greater international commitment is necessary in this field. Currently, UNESCO remains one of the largest contributors in efforts to protect heritage sites. However, the lack of consistent engagement by the international community means that efforts and protection measures are limited. With the idea of World Heritage Sites itself designed to highlight and preserve areas of universal human value, it is imperative that the international community becomes more involved.

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