

Forum: General Assembly 1 - GA1

Issue: Developing Measures to Address Conflicts in Syria

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Introduction

For a long time, Syria has arguably experienced one of the most severe and complicated civil crises in history. The nation has been in an armed conflict since 2011 as a consequence of the civil protests that occurred during the Arab Spring. Such protests called for reforms to the country's political system and more liberties for the citizens. However, the government of President Bashar Al-Assad dispensed with them. Afterward, the political disturbance became more intricate, involving various local and global players and radical organizations. With the increasing participation of world superpowers and regional stakeholders, the situation in Syria became more complicated and subsequently turned into a proxy war. Russia and Iran supported the regime of Assad, while the United States, Turkey, and Gulf states supported the opposition forces, which only added to the fragmentation of the conflict.

The Islamic State (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra, on the other hand, took advantage of the political mess in Syria and began to construct the nation's political governance model. The civil warfare devastated the infrastructure on an extensive scale, setting entire regions ablaze. These include Aleppo, Homs, neighbors, and cities such as Raqqa. And turning them into obliterated states of rubble and chaos, which resulted in thousands being stripped bare of fundamental human needs.

Daunting counts of individuals have been killed and millions driven away both internally and externally due to the catastrophic crisis that has erupted. The Syrian war has led to a refugee crisis rarely seen before, where Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan are accommodating millions of Syrians in life-threatening conditions. Along with those above, many individuals have also fled to Europe seeking safety, which has not been easy.

The suffering of the Syrian people is further maximized due to the crippling economic collapse. Businesses have been demolished, leading to countless jobs being lost and further embedding the country into poverty. Propaganda devices and medical equipment are needed, and so is humanitarian aid; however, that is insufficient to extract the country from its current condition.

However, the crisis was still unsolved despite tremendous international pressure and actions. United Nations has held many sessions to bridge the gap and resolve the issue, but lack of consensus and support from other

countries has always been an issue. While the Assad regime has suppressed some parts of the country, there are still parts left that suffer severely.

Through the guidance of a local organization, Syria is grappling with unprecedented difficulties in the governance of its society, economy, and political system owing to the consign that the decade-long civil war inflicted. As a result, international cooperation in rebuilding these systems with the help of foreigners will be obligatory concerning forsaking the underlying issues that contributed to the war. The situation highlights the consequences of war from a different angle and serves as a call for action to ensure peace in the region.

Definition of Key Terms

Accountability and Transitional Justice -

The concept of accountability implies that some people or institutions are punished for breaching legal norms or professional ethics to ensure justice. Transitional justice encompasses a broad range of mechanisms, such as truth-seeking and reparations and legal prosecutions, which have been developed to respond to pervasive human rights violations during socio-political transitions. In Syria, accountability and transitional justice are key components in dealing with the issue of war crimes, genocide, and widespread or systematic human rights abuses by all adversaries in the conflict. These measures are necessary for interethnic reconciliation, re-establishing faith among the communities, and guaranteeing sustainable peace by deterring abusive behavior and establishing justice for the victims and survivors.

Ceasefire -

A ceasefire indicates a truce to hostilities, a temporary or permanent agreement between conflicting parties. It is usually a means towards either peace talks or humanitarian efforts. About the Syrian conflict, temporary agreements during the war have been made with the aim of violence reduction, civilian protection, and allowing aid to be accessed. Although some of these agreements, particularly the ones made in regional conferences with international bodies like the UN, managed to calm conflict for a while, they have been broken repeatedly because there was distrust, violation, and divergent objectives among the conflicting parties. It has become imperative to consider peaceful coexistence to resolve Syria's destabilized humanitarian situation. Accordingly, the country's humanitarian and political challenges, focusing on establishing a normalized, stronger civil society, is redefining the need for a cease-fire in Syria.

Sectarianism -

As explained in the previous section, sectarianism, which refers to undue adherence to a specific sect or religion, has played a primary role in the crisis in Syria. Due to the presence of Sunni Muslims, Alawites, Christians, Druze, and Kurds in Syria, there was polarization due to the Alawite-dominated prophecy, which turned out to be

an Alawite minority, and it became the protector of the minorities against the Sunni opposition. Processes further intensified after the rise of particular extremist groups. So, radical sectarianism emerged, which worked for the elimination of minorities in the Middle East. Many regional and global countries have taken advantage of these divides. For instance, Iran has aided Assad and Shia militia forces.

In contrast, a Sunni-majority country such as Saudi Arabia, alongside Turkey, aided opposing side forces, thus transforming Syria into a proxy war. Finding solutions for any sectarianism is significant in resolving the conflicts; appropriate means include inclusiveness, reconciliation, anti-propaganda, and curtailing more foreign engagement in progressive causes. Some critical development measures include restoring faith between the people of Syria, safeguarding the rights of the minorities, and building stronger ties to ensure the Great Lakes region has peace and stability in the long term.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) -

Refugees leave their countries due to war or violence as well as persecution and cross international borders with the hope of being safe. IDPs or internally displaced persons must vacate their homes for similar reasons but remain in the same country. Syria has seen millions of its population being forced to leave their homes due to extreme violence, destruction, and persecution, which in turn has led to the emergence of IDPs and refugees. Countries like Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon are now host to a large number of refugees, leading to a regional humanitarian crisis. IDPs in Syria, when compared to outside, are in a much dire situation as they have limited to no access to essential resources and security. At the same time, there is still violence raging around them.

Proxy War -

In simple terms, a proxy war is when two powers fund different parties during a war to protect their interests rather than engage themselves in the fight. A current proxy war that is ongoing with the development of Iran and Russia supporting the Assad regime with military and financial aid, whereas the United States, Turkey, and Gulf states supported and continue to support opposing moderate rebel groups unravels the hypocrisy of the US stance on Syria. All these other countries' involvement has caused more significant division and a prolonged conflict in the region of Syria, turning it into a wrestling ground for the global powers.

Reconstruction -

Reconstruction is building or rebuilding the institutions, the communities, and the infrastructure that may have been damaged due to conflict or disaster. In Syria, where war has raged for the better part of a decade and has left the cities in ruins, infrastructure obliterated, and the society fragmented, the need for reconstruction is imperative in restoring the country to a functional state. Essential services have been destroyed, the economy has crumbled, and millions have fled from the violence, so it is apparent that reconstruction at this moment feels impossible. To maintain freedom from violence and foster long-term economic revival, reconstruction will require

not only physical infrastructure but also the address of the grievances of society and make room for political integration to maintain a balanced environment.

Radicalization -

In essence, radicalization can be defined as the process where an individual is aggressive in reinstating extreme beliefs and ideologies that might motivate him/her to perform violent acts with a political, religious, or ideological aim. It is no secret that the Syrian conflict is multifaceted, and radicalism has no doubt been at its core; as countries like the US and Syria exploit ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra's extremist division for political leverage, the effect of radicalism is dire. Countries with poverty, mass displacement, and little to no education face a growing risk of falling prey to radicalization, the other end of the border, or dimension violence everywhere. And the worry grows greater as combatants begin pouring in from all over the world to join the war in Syria.

Mediation -

Mediation is a mechanism whereby an independent person assists two or more people or groups in defining a problem and negotiating an agreement. After the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, it was evident that mediation would be needed to address the numerous political, social, and military disputes that arose. The targets of UN initiatives, such as the peace conferences in Geneva and Astana, were to reconcile the Assad regime with opposition groups and other parties in the conflict. However, on many occasions, the durable resolution of the conflict has been hampered by multi-layered violence, hostile policies, and geopolitical interests from international players.

History

The Arab Spring and the Outbreak of the Syrian Civil War (2011) -

The Syrian populace was also urged to seek political reformation, anti-corruption, and more liberties after the start of the Arab Spring that took place in the late 2010s due to them having witnessed the democratic movement widespread across the Middle East and North African regions. In March 2011, a peaceful protest took place in Daraa after children subjected to torture under detention due to anti-government graffiti were freed. The response of the Arab republics to the anti-regime demonstrations was violent repression followed by unrest and, later, a civil uprising. By mid-2011, increasingly widespread demonstrations against the Assad regime had turned into an armed insurgency as the opposition movement had matured into formalized groups.

The violence altered the structure of Syrian society, which was at first a relatively unified demographic, by encouraging sectarian distinctions and cleavages between the various communities of the country. Cumulatively, the Arab Spring resulted in the Syrian civil war, which later transformed the government of the once authoritarian

nation into a Syria that was engulfed in civil conflict. The destructive nature of the war had fully demolished the economy of the country, resulting in dire humanitarian crises alongside a refugee crisis.

The Surge of Extremist Groups (2013-2014) -

While the civil war was at its peak, the extremist Islamic State (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra, among others, took advantage of the already existing chaos. They were able to declare a caliphate with the capital in Raqqa after they successfully captured a huge territory in Iraq and Syria by 2014. Due to the group's vulgar and inhumane ways, such as mass slaughter and slavery, they gained a lot of criticism from the world. These groups not only made the Indian government their target but also waged war against different opposition sides, resulting in a larger conflict.

With the rise of ISIS, the US and the global world were forced to join in, and the conflict became international. The US began coalition airstrikes on ISIS bases, while on the ground, Kurdish Forces became key supporters. Religious Extremism grew, making the conflict worse regarding the underlying issues. The presence of ISIS to gain attention and resources diverted from the ignition of all the issues, which only made things worse.

Chemical Weapons Usage and Global Action (2013-2018) -

Atrocity Terrorism was another display associated with the Syrian conflict. In August 2013, the sarin gas attack that took place in Ghouta, based on recommendation estimates, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians, and global protest ensued. While this particular assignment of guilt was hotly contested – the Assad regime purportedly assumed this lead, it was, nonetheless, assumed. Consequently, it came to pass that the US seized the opportunity to negotiate Syria's chemical weapons stockpile destruction. Still, the years that followed saw an escalation in chemical weapons usage, with two notable examples, the Douma (2018) and Khan Shaykhun(2017) attacks, which were all met with significant backlash.

These showed the increasing importance of the international community to ameliorate war crimes in Syria. Sure enough, the US-Russia agreement was reached and, for the time being, contrary to the proliferation of chemical weapons, had been such a success. Further support is also boosted by these events, portraying the continued failure of the entire world to police itself, which undermined trust amongst the Syrian audience and aggravated problems in humanitarian assistance. From a political point of view, these coincided with a deepening of differences between the various foreign participants in the Syrian conflict.

Russian Intervention (2015- Present) -

The military intervention to assist the Assad administration was conducted by Russia starting in September 2015. Russian forces utilized ground forces and air strikes in the battle to take key territories, particularly Aleppo,, in 2016. Russian involvement redrew the maps and shifted the political balance, enabling Assad's regime to secure most of the country.

Assad's intervention shifted the course of the hands-off collision, propelling him to claim primary dominance and order among the provinces and sidelining most active opponent groups. It also increased the chances that effective negotiations would never occur as the regime was less willing to work with the opposition. Civilians and parts of the opposition area were frequent targets for Russian airstrikes, which contributed to further displacement and destruction. Russia's actions served to polarize the world's *великой державы*, furthering the complexity of attempts to find a diplomatic solution to the problem.

Key Issues

The intermingling of socio-political and historical events in Syria caused the civil war, which would eventually lead Syria into a conflict. Throughout the years, Syria was home to a variety of ethnicities, such as Christians and Druze, but also to a variety of religions, such as Sunni Muslims and Alawites. The Ottoman Empire's collapse led to the occupation of France, which enabled policies that focused on integrating and establishing more substantial divisions within the ethnic groups. Political turmoil and frequent coups resided in Syria primarily due to the establishment of an authoritarian regime by the Ba'ath Party after gaining independence in 1963.

The Alawite minority of Syria experienced favoritism and support from the Syrian party during the rule of Hafez al-Assad, who came to power in 1970. Bashar al-Assad became a successor in the year 2000, and his advancements in serving his nation only resulted in corruption and a rise in economic inequality. At first, US President Bush intended to introduce reforms but later failed to achieve unity among the Sunni population, which additionally led to civil suffering and conflict.

Things reached a climax in the year 2011 during the Arab Spring, whereby Democracy protests emerged in the Middle East as well as North Africa. The people of Syria came out peacefully arm in arm with Tunisia and Egypt jointly in March 2011 to empower democracy, de-corrupt the government, and achieve Freedom. The regime of Assad, however, unleashed its forces against civilians, subjecting them to Mass torture together with live ammunition and mass arrests. The assassination genocide of civilians triggered an outburst of civil war against the regime, patterning what started as expected civilian protests.

The Evolving of a Brawl into a Multidimensional Clash -

There was a shift in the curve when the unease began turning into an unprecedented brawl. The opposition forces comprised not only terrorists sharing the Syrian army civilians volunteering enhanced into a joining host of groups, each having their distinct varied objectives and ideologies. Cutting across these sieges were jihadist formations that gobbled on the confusion of power and territorial control, putting an Islamic twist to the conflict. Northward, the Kurdish regions had their factions tussling for self-governance, escalating the tension beyond measure.

The war effused several regional and international actors, making Syria a proxy war zone, with Iran and Hezbollah providing both military and financial support to the Assad regime. In addition, Russia's involvement, which started in 2015 with airstrikes and other military support, fundamentally changed the balance of power in favor of Assad. On the other hand, the United States, Turkey, and Gulf states provided support to moderate and extremist opposition groups, often in disjointed patterns and working against one another. The outcome was another senseless and bloody civil war that wrecked the country.

International Response and Attempts -

As much as possible, the international community has undertaken several measures to resolve the issue, albeit in vain. The role of the UN as a mediatory body for conflict resolution has been outstanding through organizing the Geneva Process and Astana talks, where ceasefires and political interventions were suggested. As per the reports, there have been attempts to end the war entirely; however, alienation between nations made it complex. Furthermore, the UN has set systems in place to aid in identifying war crimes, which include the use of chemical weapons.

Until now, the refugee crisis has created a significant burden on host countries, and Europe and other regions have been finding it difficult to politically and sociologically come to terms with the influx of asylum seekers. Access to besieged areas has always been an issue for the UN humanitarian organizations, which have assisted millions of displaced Syrians.

Current Affairs -

The Iran and Russia-backed regime of Assad has now taken control of almost all of Syria. Despite that, a large area in the northwest is still unstable due to the presence of opposition forces and extremist groups, and the northeast continues to be a contested region after the Kurdish forces took control of a significant amount of land. The rest of the nation continues to struggle economically, with poverty, high inflation, and lack of required resources affecting the other citizens.

The Syrian crisis is still categorized as a shallow humanitarian and political problem. However, when international and regional factors are considered, along with attempts to quantify its depths, it has proven time and again to be one of the most potent conflicts in modern history, with unsettling effects on world order and human rights.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Russia -

Like other members of the UN Security Council group, Russia also sided with the Assad regime, supplying it with military means, which determined the development of the conflict. His role in the peace talks and ceasefire agreements was that of a mediator.

The United States of America -

The U.S. had organized support to those opposing the regime, coordinated an international alliance against ISIS, and placed economic restrictions on the Assad rule. It is still participating in various diplomatic initiatives and rebuilding efforts in moderated areas.

Turkey -

Turkey militarily occupied Northern Syria after supporting the Syrian opposition, harboring over three million refugees, and invaded the Northern part to create a safe zone from its borders.

Iran -

Iran has been a key player in the Assad regime by providing funds, military forces, and bringing militias to protect the government. Its presence has changed the landscape of the war.

European Union -

Apart from being one of the leading providers of humanitarian assistance to people caught in the conflict, the EU member states also participated in diplomatic attempts to end the fighting. They also attempted to find solutions for the emerging refugee problem and terrorism emanating from the region.

Arab League -

The member states of the Arab League participated in responding to the conflict, while Syria’s membership was suspended in 2011. The organization has advocated for talks and endorsed global approaches to manage the turmoil.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Event
March, 2011	Protests erupted in Daraa after the detention and torture of children, sparking nationwide demonstrations against the Assad regime.
July, 2011	The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed by military defectors to resist the regime, marking the start of armed rebellion.
August, 2012	The United Nations declared the situation in Syria a civil war as fighting intensified

	across the country
August, 2013	A chemical weapons attack in Ghouta killed hundreds, prompting international outrage and a U.S.-Russia agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical arsenal.
June, 2014	ISIS declared a caliphate after seizing significant territory in Syria and Iraq, adding an extremist dimension to the conflict.
September, 2015	Russia began a military intervention in support of the Assad regime, shifting the balance of power in the war.
December 2016	The Assad regime recaptured Aleppo after months of devastating fighting, marking a turning point in the conflict.
March, 2019	ISIS lost its final territorial stronghold in Syria, ending its caliphate but leaving behind instability.
2020-present	Ongoing violence, economic collapse, and humanitarian crises continue, with large parts of Syria still unstable.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Genova Process -

The UN facilitated the start of the Geneva Process, which sought to end the ongoing Syrian conflict. It all began with the Geneva Communiqué of 2012, which, in essence, selected a ruling body that combined members of both the Syrian government as well as the terrorist opposition who were to be in charge of writing a new constitution and sending the framework to the people to be voted on. All of the translations pointed to one vision, the political representation of all the people, and an agreement with all of the claims addressed was the final goal.

However, the most brutal problem for the Geneva Process was its excessive visibility. First of all, the future of President Bashar al-Assad emerged as a key contention, with the opposition's call for his removal from political power and the regime's position being his assumption of power. In addition, the US - Republicans and Democrats had different views on the matter, the Turkish regime placed different assessments on the Syrian opposition, and both Iran and Russia complicated positions for all. Still, measures to quench the process have been reiterated in the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 dated January 12, 2015. Syria has not witnessed a definite political arrangement at the currency of the process. It does serve a purpose as a political bargaining setup, but peacekeepers aren't engaged in resolving the situation, so the supposed aim of the platform is not met.

Humanitarian Initiatives by the United Nations -

Syria currently lacks the proper humanitarian resources due to its civil war. The United Nations and many other organizations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and others

working under the OCHA, are running operations to provide the necessities of life to the citizens of Syria, including food, water, shelter, and medical resources for IDPs and refugees.

One of the factors that helped with providing such resources was the resolution passed by the Security Council, UN Security Council Resolution 2165, or in simple terms, border aid, which allowed the provision of resources without consulting the Syrian Government. If looked at more closely, it was a major decision to be endorsed by the opposition-controlling regions since Syria had a history of only aiding the peripheral regions of opposition. Although it proved to be a life-saving aid, especially for those in rough terrains, it still has remained an issue with ongoing political disputes, violence, and blockades, with the UN still being able to make some progress with the supply of aid.

Despite all this, the resources available seem to be less with the growing situation in Syria. At the same time, Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon fail to keep up with the demand due to a lack of adequate resources with the funding programs struggling to build up for expansion. It proves the UN's efforts are appreciable, but further development is needed to resolve the situation efficiently.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) (2016) -

The UN General Assembly set up the IIIM in December 2016 as a means to "gather and document evidence of war atrocities, crimes against humanity, and other violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated in the course of the Syrian conflict. Its chief aim is to diligently gather all types of evidence with the potential to assist in any future prosecution in national, regional, or international courts.

Because the mechanism is set to operate without any political influence, it can guarantee neutrality in its investigations. It has collaborated with civil society organizations, activists, and even humanitarian groups to collect testimonies, forensic evidence, and documents. One of their notable contributions has been their support for the cases filed in European courts that fall under the principle of universal jurisdiction to prosecute heinous acts irrespective of the location in which they took place.

The IIIM has been an important mosaic piece in initiating accountability and has brought a glimpse of hope of justice for victims of atrocities. However, the IIIM suffers from the lack of jurisdiction over Syria and the silence of some key offenders. Moreover, the lack of Syrian government assistance and political fractures in the UN Security Council have impeded attempts to seek referral of cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Regardless, the IIIM stands as one of the main sources of international attempts to redress serious violations of human rights in Syria and to make sure that justice is served well within the forgotten future of post-conflict Syria.

Possible Solutions

One way to mitigate the challenges posed by the Syrian conflict may be through establishing a conciliatory and all-encompassing political settlement. This means that peace negotiations must be re-established within the purview of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, which emphasizes the cessation of hostilities, democratic elections, and amendments to the constitution. Each and every party to the conflict, in particular the Assad regime, opposition, and Kurdish groups need to be part of the solution to the issue to ensure adequate representation of all the communities within Syria. The region's heavyweights and global players like Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the United States should also be on board to encourage dialogue and pressure their proxies to reach an agreement. Confidence building measures such as localised ceasefires and prisoner swaps can serve as a springboard towards larger agreements. Similarly, international guarantees for the protection of minorities through power sharing can help heal the divides and address the issues that triggered the grievances needed to resolve the conflict.

It is also essential to consider the prioritization of humanitarian aid, reconstruction, and economic recovery as the most pressing issue in Syria today. The UN, EU, and other donor countries should increase their funding to humanitarian projects to provide adequate food, medical attention, and shelter for the homeless and refugee populations. Refugees should also be allowed to return to the country once infrastructure needs such as schools, hospitals, and water systems are met. Economic recovery should seek to replace the civilians harming targeted sanctions with sustained pressure on the war crime appealing individuals. International funding should incorporate conditions for transparency and accountability to ensure that corrupt actors are not empowered. There is a need to improve the regional collaborative efforts and economic integration to legitimize the functional economy of Syria and provide its residents with a source of income. Simultaneously, transitional justice mechanisms such as war crimes tribunals and truth commissions are essential for fostering reconciliation and making sure such acts do not occur again. This is a just and suitable approach to balance fundamental humanitarian action and sustainable development as the value reconstruction of the Syria conflict transforms the region into a peaceful location.

The interventions aimed at solving the conflict's innate aspects and consequences aim to mitigate its impact. Inclusivity, humanitarian aid, and accountability served as the essential pillars for achieving a peaceful and stable order in and around Syria.

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