**Forum:** General Assembly 2

**Issue:** Measures for healing rifts in nations divided by civil war

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**Introduction**

Civil wars tear nations apart. It has deleterious effects on the economy and infrastructure. Homes and medical units get destroyed by airstrikes and combat, and prominent trade sites close. It causes unemployment, inflation, and poverty to skyrocket. It also causes countless humanitarian issues. There have been instances of humanitarian aid being blocked from innocent citizens who need it to survive, even when hunger, disease, homelessness, and displacement plague the nation. In fact, Syria is experiencing a refugee crisis that was caused by its ongoing civil war. In December 2021, there were 6.9 million displaced people in Syria. In June of 2022, 306,887 people were murdered within the 10 years of the war, according to OHCHR. A nation becomes incredibly vulnerable when it becomes divided, and this must be immediately addressed. These rifts need to be healed with viable solutions, and peace must be brought to ensure the safety and health of all citizens.

When healing rifts in ongoing civil wars, it is absolutely imperative to reflect upon the previous attempts to end civil wars, and events that happened previously. Governments must be properly informed in order to create sound policies, mechanisms, and systems, in order to lift a nation out of conflict and poverty. However, the future must not be restrained by the invalid practices, systems, and ideals of the past. It must be delicately crafted with the knowledge of the past, and a vision of improvement and progression.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Autocratic Regime**

A regime in which a ruler has absolute power

**Buffer Zone**

A neutral zone in a nation that does not allow any military activity or hostile forces

**Ceasefire**

A temporary suspension of conflict, also called a truce

**Civil War**

A war fought between citizens who belong to the same nation

**Democracy**

A form of government in which the citizens are allowed choose eligible members of the government

**Transitional Government**

A government that is formed subsequent to a previous government’s collapse to manage a political transition

**Background**

**What is a Civil War?**

A civil war is a conflict between a state and one or more non-governmental entities within the nation. In many cases, citizens may seek autonomy from a government who is not meeting their demands, or has different views. The conflict may originate from within the national government itself, and common examples include military coups. There have also been instances of ethnic civil wars, in which the opposing entities have different ethnicities. This type of civil war was especially common within nations that had been colonized. Civil wars originate due to economic and/or political reasons. For instance, civil wars tend to occur in less developed societies, and this may be due to wealth inequality and demands for a more capable government to manage the economy. In terms of political reasons, colonization is a prominent cause, along with struggles for rights in autocratic nations. In these regimes, citizens are often repressed and not represented well in the government, leading to widespread protests.

**Syrian Civil War**

Prior to the start of the conflict, many Syrians criticized President Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded his father, Hafez, subsequent to his death in the year 2000. Protests supporting democracy broke out in Deraa in March 2011 as a result of upheavals against oppressive leaders in neighboring countries. When the Syrian government employed lethal force to quell the unrest, widespread protests calling for the president's resignation broke out. The crackdown became harsher as the protests grew, and due to this, the opposition started attacking to drive out security forces, and defend themselves. As the violence quickly increased, the nation entered a civil war. Previously, the conflict was solely between governmental armed forces and citizens, however it broadened to include hundreds of rebel organizations, radical terrorist groups, and foreign nations who lent their support to both sides. The conflict has also had severe humanitarian and economic repercussions such as malnourishment, destruction of infrastructure, and inflation (due to US Sanctions, economic crises in neighboring nations, and COVID 19). Foreign nations and organizations such as the United Nations have intervened, although President Assad has reportedly refused to negotiate with any groups who oppose his rule and military actions.

**Yemeni Civil War**

The Yemeni civil war began due to discrimination against Zaidi Imams (the Shia Muslim sect in northern Yemen). They were seen as a threat to the Sunni majority government, led by Ali Abdullah Saleh. In the Arab Spring, demonstrators for democracy flocked to the streets in an effort to persuade Ali Abdullah Saleh to abandon his position of 33 years. Tensions had increased by March of 2011, where protesters were shot by the military in the capital. An international agreement was reached, eventually, when Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi (the previous vice president) became president, as a result of elections in February 2012. However, his attempts to amend the constitution and rework budget plans were rejected by northern Houthi rebels. They eventually took control of the capital, and demanded better prices for fuel, and an improved government. However, the negotiations proved to be useless, because the Houthis seized the presidential palace. The increasing intervention of international and regional entities in this conflict has also exacerbated it, along with issues such as COVID. Other issues that have arisen include displacement, diversion of humanitarian aid, and economic instability caused by low purchasing power. Peace processes have become extensively complicated due to these uncontrolled interventions, but many nations and organizations have agreed that it is necessary to first lift the weight of the shoulders of the suffering civilian population by stabilizing the economy and ensuring a healthy flow of humanitarian aid and development coming into Yemen. They also wish to hold the Houthi rebel group accountable for their actions and make their intentions clear if there are any further attacks by the group.

**Internal Conflict in Myanmar**

In the decades since it gained independence, Myanmar has experienced military control, civil war, government incompetence, and pervasive poverty. Hope for Myanmar's democratic reforms were crushed in February of 2021 due to a military coup. A brutal new chapter recently began in Myanmar. The Tatmadaw military is widely and vehemently opposed by militias. Ethnic armed groups and citizens had fought against the military, and these militias were created by them as well. Former legislators and activists deployed forces all around the nation and formed a shadow government, intending to combat the military. In response, the military launched a harsh crackdown on the opposition. The coup quickly led to a humanitarian crisis in Myanmar and launched the state into yet another civil war. Millions are malnourished, and the economy suffered significantly in 2021. The primary reason for all of this conflict is the ethnic discrimination that has plagued the nation for many years. Myanmar is very ethnically diverse, but it is mainly composed of ethnic Burmans, who enjoy a high standard of living and are seen as the dominant ethnicity. Other ethnic groups are discriminated against by the government and abused. Many of these discriminatory cycles and “ethnic cleansing” were engineered purposely during the British colonial rule, and their influence in society and laws is still extremely prevalent due to the military control. The main priority for allied nations and the UN at the moment is providing humanitarian assistance to the citizens and victims of this conflict, along with helping facilitate a democratic transformation in Myanmar.

**Major Parties Involved**

**United States of America**

The United States has intervened in many civil wars, including the ones listed above. The USA’s involvement and support has been a pivotal factor in these civil wars. For instance, in Syria, the United States provided medical care, weapons to vetted rebel groups, food, clean water, and shelter. The US has provided over $12.2 billion to the Syrian citizens for humanitarian assistance. The US also exerted economic pressure on the military government of Myanmar by imposing sanctions and restricting exports. The nation is also redirecting $42.2 billion to humanitarian aid to Myanmar’s citizens (to increase food security and peace) and is building international support with Myanmar’s neighboring countries to better address the coup. In terms of the Yemeni Civil War, the US is currently backing the Saudi led Coalition, and has established numerous counterterrorism programs, as well as providing the military with $850 million.

**The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)**

UNOCHA coordinates humanitarian response in complex emergencies, as well as natural disasters. The organization mobilizes financing mechanisms, and also provides information management services. A notable part of this coordination office is UN-CMCoord. It is a framework that was developed for humanitarian civil-military coordination (or ways to coordinate humanitarian aid in a crisis with a strong military presence, and ensure that civilians and military forces will be able to collaborate with each other to ensure safety). This is especially crucial for nations that are in a civil war such as Myanmar (organizations and armed groups that combat the Tatmadaw military have been formed by the citizens themselves). The framework supports UNOCHA with the management and interaction with military actors as well.

**United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**

In war-torn countries, the UNDP has been and is an instrumental entity in terms of economic reform and paving the road to self-sufficiency for communities inside these countries. Many of these communities rely heavily on humanitarian assistance due to the unstable state of their nation’s economy, however UNDP works to build capacity and help these citizens decrease their dependency on foreign aid. UNDP has worked with Myanmar, Yemen, and Syria on these issues. The program tackles poverty, promotes clean energy, and assists nations with rebuilding their infrastructure and financing development projects.

**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

A common attempt that has been made to resolve civil wars is sanctions. For example, in Myanmar, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, imposed sanctions on Myanmar’s military-controlled government, and several companies (including companies specializing in steel and fuel services) were also urged to suspend their functions in Myanmar. The aim of a sanction is to put pressure on a government that poses a perceived threat, to prevent further violence and conflict from occurring. However, sanctions did not have a great effect on Myanmar. They have not had a large impact on military activity (which was its primary purpose). It also increased unemployment in the nation, further complicating the situation for citizens and the general public, who bear the brunt of civil war effects. The sanctions sometimes worked to the advantage of the military, because it decreased competition for many sectors, and Myanmar became isolated from the world, with the restriction of technology and information of the models of a good government.

Another common attempt made to solve these issues is peace talks and peace processes. Many times, with uncooperative entities, it is extremely difficult for the peace talks to come to fruition. However, this doesn’t mean that they will not produce strong results for all circumstances. A prime example is the situation in Syria. For example, according to Geneva Solutions: “Talks between Syria’s government and the opposition in Geneva last week were described as a “big disappointment” by UN special envoy Geir Pedersen after they failed to reach consensus on drafting a new constitution”. As previously mentioned, President Assad refused to cooperate several times with the opposition. The groups had fundamentally opposite positions and ideals, which largely contributed to the difficulty of the peace talks. During peace talks, it was also crucial to take into account the vast amounts of allies (international) and other regional actors involved in the war. So consensus would not only need to be forged within the two main parties, but also with the interests of the allies.

Types of arms and weapons have also been restricted in the past in war torn countries. A prime example is Security Council resolution 2118, largely concerned with the complete elimination of chemical weapons in Syria. It urges the use of weapons in the conflict to be very closely monitored, calling all member states to contribute. The resolution also frequently references the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, also known as the OPCW. Personnel from this organization were called upon to implement the resolution within the nation, with the Security Council promising technical and financial assistance. Lastly, the resolution calls for a transition governing body to assist with the facilitation of these preventative measures.

Link to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2118.pdf>

Link to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2624 (concerning the arms embargo extension for the Yemeni Civil War):

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_RES_2624.pdf>

Link to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669 (concerning the restraint & de-escalation of tensions in Myanmar): <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/767/33/PDF/N2276733.pdf?OpenElement>

**Possible Solutions**

* A possible step to take in this situation would be to press for a comprehensive ceasefire agreement between parties. Here, all parties involved in the war would be held accountable for their actions. Armed forces could be redeployed to another tactical position, or they could withdraw from certain areas. Pressure and military presence could also be relieved at prominent trading sites, such as ports, gulfs, canals, etc, because this would also open the doors to economic development and reform. The creation of buffer zones or restricted zones could also be possible within nations, where it will be ensured that certain types of weaponry or military activities will not take place. However, it is imperative that these ceasefire agreements must be specific and direct, with absolute clarity on the location of ceasefire areas, and the protection of citizens.
* Another possible step to take is to address the economic issues that stemmed from the war. A stable and balanced economy will tend to exert a positive impact on political stability as well. Economic development is severely stunted by conflict, with the destruction of infrastructure, plants, and other necessary areas, along with increasing levels of corruption and mismanagement of a nation that is grappling with war. Working with organizations such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the World Bank is also a possibility here, as they will help governments allocate resources and funding to economic development and aid to communities. Lastly, it is imperative to consider the effect that wars have on the purchasing power of a nation’s currency. Stabilizing the currency and initiating mechanisms to combat inflation is therefore a priority as well.
* When healing rifts between parties in a civil war, it is crucial to consider what caused them in the first place. For example, many civil wars have begun due to the effects of colonization, or because of disparities caused by ethnic discrimination. Two prime examples are the Yemeni Civil War and the Myanmar Civil War. If a nation is planning to form a transitional government, ample caution should be taken to ensure that these root causes of discrimination do not surface again. This could include the revision of laws, legislations, and national response mechanisms, along with immediately addressing any economic disparities targeting the involved ethnic groups. Another point to consider is the democratic reform of countries that were previously autocratic regimes. In a transitional government in this situation, transparency and inclusion of all political stances in lawmaking. This transition calls for immediate confrontation of any issues that might further incite military activity.
* A fourth solution to consider on this issue would be the protection and education of a war-torn nation’s youth. 230 million children are currently living in conflict-ridden environments, and the lack of protection and education they are receiving is affecting both them and the nation immensely. There is a very clear correlation between education inequality and conflict. Better educated societies are often more peaceful, and it paves the way for equal distribution of resources, political power, and wealth, which all (at some point in history) have been causes of civil wars. A better educated youth would be instrumental in ending the propagation of division, rift, and conflict in war-torn nations.
* A final and crucial point to consider is to regulate international intervention in civil wars. In some civil wars, external interference created more rifts instead of healing them, and repeatedly infringed upon the sovereignty of nations. Solutions should be both effective and minimally invasive to war torn countries. Clear boundaries should be established, and conflict caused by this interference should be immediately de-escalated by the governments held responsible.

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