Research Report

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Security Council

Preventing the escalation of armed conflicts and protecting international peace and security

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Introduction

Right now, more than 150 armed conflicts are going on in the world, some bigger than others. Some have taken place for over 50 years, others have started recently. Most of them take place in the Middle-East, with 45 conflicts going on at the moment. In Europe, 7 conflicts are happening right now. By far most conflicts are non-international armed conflicts (NIACs) meaning they happen within the border of a country, usually between states or regions. As a result of these conflicts, people's rights are in danger. The task of the security council is to maintain and regain peace in the world by providing security measures.

General Overview

International armed conflicts:

- An international armed conflict (IAC) is a conflict where two or more states resort to armed forces against each other. For a conflict to be classified as an IAC, parties involved must be states or groups acting on behalf of the state and the use of force needs to be a hostile act, and may not be the result of an individual's acting.

Non-international armed conflicts:

- For a situation of violence between government forces of a state and one or more organized armed groups to be classified as a non-international armed conflict (NIAC), hostile acts must reach a certain level of intensity and all parties involved must be organised, such as governments. If those criteria are met, the international humanitarian law applies.

International Humanitarian Law:

- If the criteria for an NIAC or IAC are met, the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) applies. This law imposes rules on how the war should be conducted and it contains protective measures for those not participating in hostile acts such as civilians, sick and wounded.
- In the case of an IOC, all state members that signed the IHL are obligated to respect the law and send resources if necessary. These parties are not directly involved in the armed conflict.
- IHL is a compromise between two key principles: humanity and military necessity. The principle of military necessity only permits the minimum amount and kind of force that is required to achieve the legitimate purpose of the conflict. It does not permit the taking of measures that would in every possible way be in violation with the IHL.

  The principle of humanity forbids the infliction of all suffering, injury or destruction not necessary for achieving the legitimate purpose of a conflict. People not taking part in hostility must be treated humanly at all times. Parties to a conflict must make a difference between combatants and civilians in order to protect the civilian population and their properties. All involved parties must take precautionary measures in order to respect and protect civilians rights and minimize civilian harm. Examples are verifying targets, issuing warnings and selecting means of attack that reduce incidental harm.

  Attacks may only be made on military property
- If a nation does not respect the IHL, this is seen as a war crime. Individuals and commanders can be held responsible, not necessarily a nation's government. However, states can also face consequences for a violation of the law, such as the obligation to provide reparations for damage, and take steps to avoid violation again.

Major Parties Involved

- United Nations : Security Council
  - The security council is the primary actor in the prevention of armed conflicts and the maintaining of peace
  - The UN security council can impose sanctions, call for ceasefires and most importantly it can take sanctions quickly in urgent situations
  - The security council has five permanent members: these include China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. These five members have veto powers, so they play a very important role in the prevention of IOCs.
  - The rest of the security council consists of 10 non-permanent members that are elected every year

- United nations general assembly:
    - The general assembly of the UN consists of all member states, in which states can hand in resolutions and recommendations. The adaptation of resolutions in the General Assembly can take longer
- International Committee of the Red Cross
    - Protects human rights, promotes the IHL
    - Not a political organisation
- Regional organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), European Union (EU) and African Union (AU)
    - NATO: alliance for collective defence
    - European union: provides military assistance to EU members to provide international peace and security
    - African union: Works on the prevention of conflicts across Africa

Possible Solutions

- To maintain peace and security, states need to prevent armed conflict, as the aftermath of a conflict comes with enormous economic costs, and a lot of human suffering, which takes years to recover from.
    - To achieve this, it is important that early signs of conflict are recognised, to make it easier to prevent. This is called preventive diplomacy. That way, preventive actions can be taken before the tensions become more serious and violent.
    - UN organizations promote peace by assisting in restoring the rule of law in the involved nations and help those nations by forming a well-functioning government. They can send envoys to areas of tension and bring opposing parties together for negotiation, in order to form an agreement that stops the nations from being violent and also helps with the compliance of it.
- The UN Office for disarmament affairs works to advance international peace and security through the pursuit of the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of small arms and light weapons.
- If violence has already started, the UN deploys peacekeeping operations to create and maintain ceasefires, separate opposing forces and support negotiations to create conditions that can create long-term peace agreements.