



# UNESCO

**United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and  
Cultural Organization**

*STUDY GUIDE*



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## 1. Welcoming Letters

### 1.1 Letter from Secretary General

Distinguished Participants of EKJ-BMUN'26,

It is a very splendid honor to welcome you all to Erciyes College Junior-Beginner Model United Nations Conference. I am Rmeysa Baęovan, the Secretary General of EKJ-BMUN'26 conference. Within 3 years of efforts and exertions, I am proud to be part of this year's unique event. In our conferences, where we are accustomed to achieving firsts, I am grateful to be organizing the first Beginner Model United Nations conference in Kayseri this year as another first and only.

You can be sure that EKJ-BMUN'26 will be a home, a place to be confident, an exclusive experience, a memory that is unforgettable and an event that will be immense for everyone who attends. You will get a special opportunity and place for debate, collaborate and share your superb ideas in this field. My team is working with a diligence just to delight you and make you feel privileged in here. With my marvelous academic team, you will be treated like you are the future's diplomats who make the world better with your ideas and lights in your brains.

I am so proud of what I have done just for your satisfaction. I have no doubt about my team's endeavors and fervency for make the best conference ever seen. I am keen to see your performance in this endemic conference. Lastly i can say, in my 30 experiences in 3 years, even I have never seen more fabulous conference like EKJ-BMUN'26. So, I think now i encourage you to attend and show your magnificence in here. My pleasure.

Best Regards,

Rmeysa BAęOVAN  
SECRETARY GENERAL

### 1.2 Letter from Under Secretary General

Hello everyone, I am Ege Utku Bal, 10th grade student at Osman Ulubaş Kşk Anatolian High School and i will be serving as your Under Secretary General throught this committee. It is a great honor to be in this wonderful committee. I am pretty excited to meet you all and be your guide throughout these 2 days. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me any questions in your minds.

Best Regards  
Ege Utku Bal

## **2. Introduction to the Committee**

### **2.1. Who is UNESCO?**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a specialized agency dedicated to strengthening international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and information. We set standards, produce tools, and develop knowledge to create solutions to some of the greatest challenges of our time and foster a world of greater equality and peace. Protecting biodiversity, responding to artificial intelligence, advancing quality education, safeguarding heritage, and ensuring access to reliable information are some examples of the work that UNESCO does with its 194 Member States across the globe. The General Conference, the Secretariat and the Executive Board. The General Conference, with representatives from all Member States, determines UNESCO's main lines of work. The Secretariat executes the Organization's programme under the authority of the Director-General. The Executive Board monitors the implementation of the Organization's programme. Together, these bodies drive UNESCO's efforts in education, science, culture, and communication.

UNESCO was founded in 1945 as the successor to the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. UNESCO's founding mission, which was shaped by the events of World War II, is to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights by facilitating collaboration and dialogue among nations. It pursues this objective through five major programme areas: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information. UNESCO sponsors projects that improve literacy, provide technical training and education, advance science, protect independent media and press freedom, preserve regional and cultural history, and promote cultural diversity. The organization prominently helps establish and secure World Heritage Sites of cultural and natural importance.

The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

## **2.2. Key Issues and Challenges: Education and Culture**


That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war.

That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races.

That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.

That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.



For these reasons, the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives.

In consequence whereof they do hereby create the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the purpose of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its Charter proclaims.

For UNESCO, **education** is a fundamental human right that can change lives for the better. We support learning all life long—whether by promoting early childhood education, literacy for all, or technical and vocational training.

As the United Nations agency for education, UNESCO is leading efforts to implement the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4. We help national education authorities to develop and implement evidence-based policies that advance the right to education, even in emergency situations.

UNESCO is also anticipating emerging needs in education by imagining the Futures of Education and the ways in which learning can shape the future of humanity.

The notion of **culture** has greatly evolved over the last 75 years. UNESCO's actions over the past decades bear witness to the many ways in which humanity tried to understand how culture can strengthen the sense of who we are – from the awareness of the necessity to protect heritage from destruction at the end of World War II, to the launch of international campaigns to safeguard World Heritage sites and the concept of living and intangible heritage, a focus on creative economy and the need to sustain cultural jobs and livelihoods. Our relationship with culture has deeply evolved over the last century. If we look into the past, we might be better prepared to tackle further changes ahead.

### **3.Introduction to the Agenda Item: Protection of Cultural Heritage in War**

#### **Zones**

Cultural heritage is, today, particularly exposed to the devastation resulting from natural phenomena, but it is even more exposed to the destruction caused by man-made ones.

Consequently, it is critical to adopt suitable and concrete provisions for its preservation and conservation. The conflict that has been raging in Ukraine since February 2022 has spotlighted problems related to cultural heritage, which is increasingly considered a military target. Digital transformation and technologies integrated with legal tools can contribute to making the system of protection and recovery of cultural assets more effective and efficient by redefining methodologies to safeguard and interact with them. This paper proposes a framework for integrating legal and digital tools that are functional for the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of cultural heritage. To define it, on the one hand, the legal instruments in force were analysed, and on the other, a literature review on the digital technologies currently available was carried out. The role of digital transformation in the cultural sphere was also examined, especially in light of Ukraine's experience with the application of digital technologies to protect and recover cultural heritage during the current conflict.

### 3.1. Context

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is the first international treaty dedicated to safeguarding cultural heritage during war. Adopted by UNESCO in response to the widespread destruction of World War II, it establishes legal protections for cultural property, including monuments, museums, and archives.

The Convention introduces measures like the Blue Shield emblem to mark protected sites and obligates nations to prevent damage, theft, and illicit trade of cultural objects. Two additional Protocols (1954 & 1999) strengthen enforcement, including rules against the seizure of cultural property and measures for post-conflict restitution.

Protection of Cultural Heritage is a very important topic in the UNESCO as war and conflicts has the chance to damage them. International laws such as 1954 Hague Convention aims to protect these heritages that get passed down through generations. Firstly lets learn whats a cultural heritage:

**Cultural Heritage:** the traditions, places, and objects passed down from ancestors that define a community's identity. Such as monuments, artifacts etc. The cities we live in, mosques we go to, castles we visit all count as a cultural heritage. And its our responsibility to protect them.

There are a few ways to protect them, such as:

1. **Marking them as UNESCO International Amblems:** UNESCO has a system where they mark cultural heritage to ensure their safety in need. With this way countries won't target them.
2. Moving them to safer places: When war comes, destruction follows so if we move them to safer places, we can protect the heritages our ancestors left behind.
3. International Laws: Enforcing international laws is also a great way to protect cultural heritages with organizations such as the UN and UNESCO.

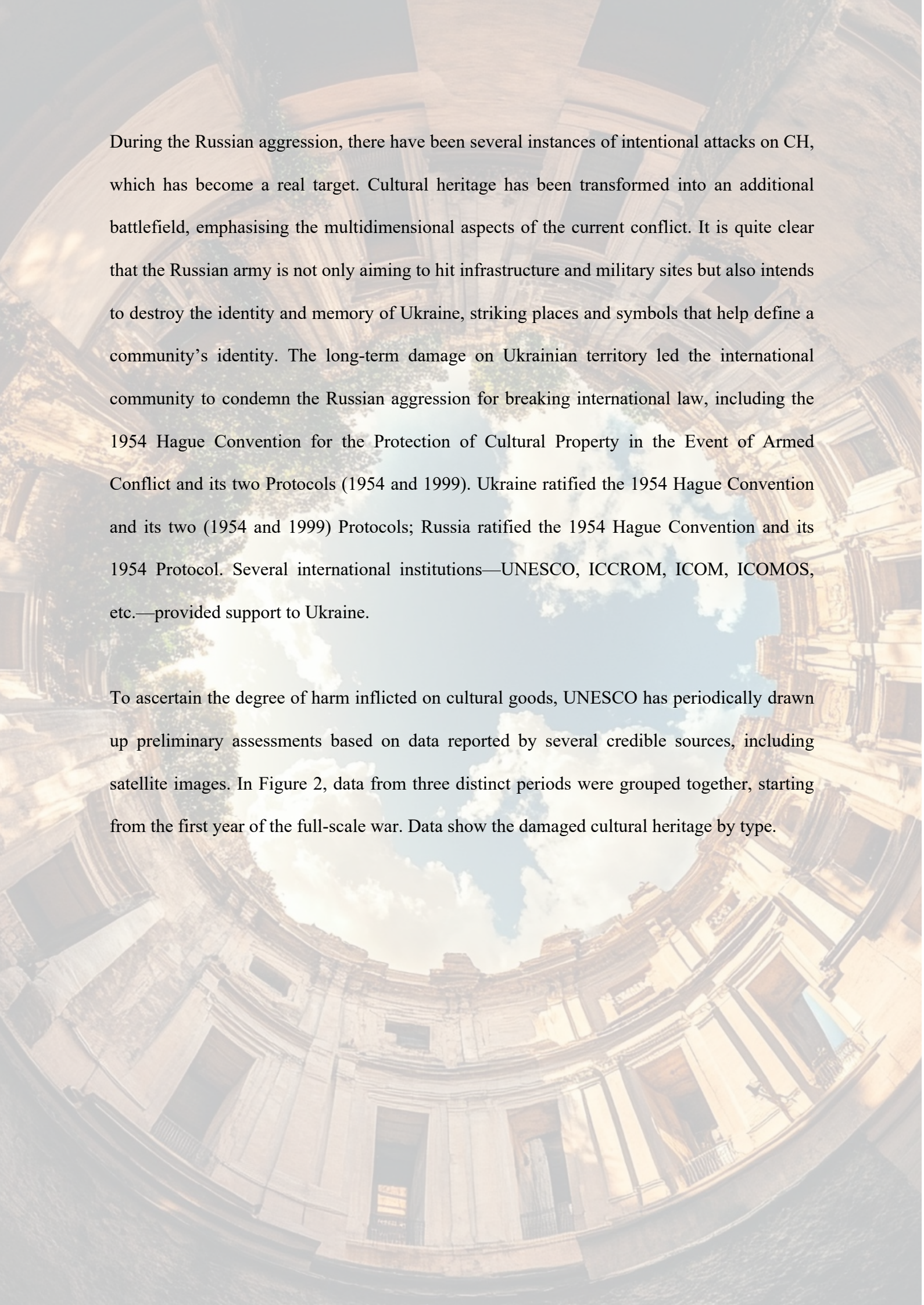
Now Lets look at Current wars happening around the world to understand it more.

### **3.2. Current Wars Happening Around the World That Affect the Cultural Heritage**

**The Russian–Ukrainian Conflict:** Digital Tools Put in Place to Save Cultural Heritage

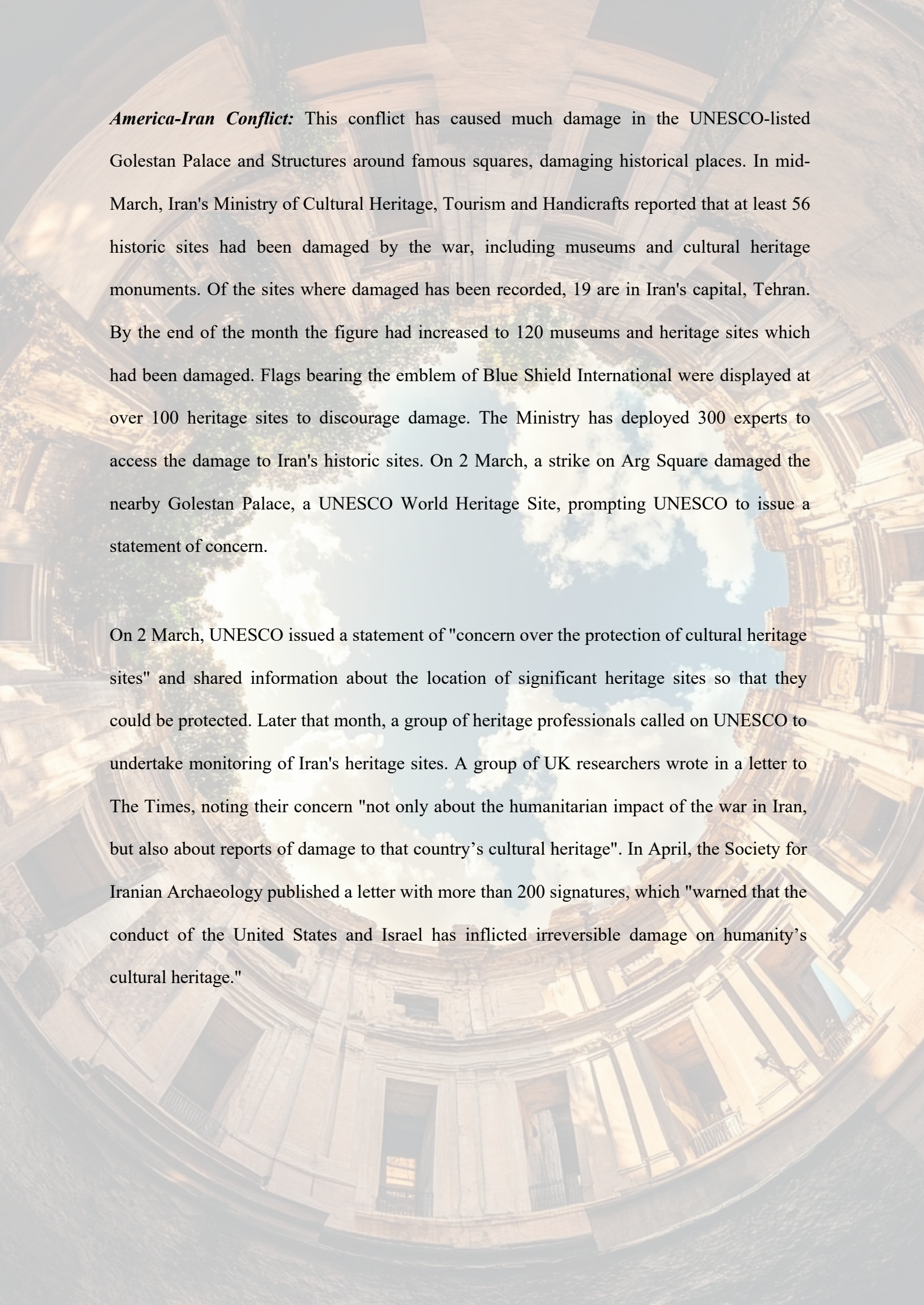
The preservation and retrieval of cultural assets have significant importance in the current Russian armed aggression against Ukraine, not secondary to other aspects closely related to the war.

The conflict brought to light the terrible effects of military operations on cultural heritage, such as hard hits by bombing, theft, and looting. Along with major losses, the offensive against Ukraine, since 2014, has resulted in the destruction of places and cultural assets. The damage to Ukraine's CH is currently the largest since World War II.



During the Russian aggression, there have been several instances of intentional attacks on CH, which has become a real target. Cultural heritage has been transformed into an additional battlefield, emphasising the multidimensional aspects of the current conflict. It is quite clear that the Russian army is not only aiming to hit infrastructure and military sites but also intends to destroy the identity and memory of Ukraine, striking places and symbols that help define a community's identity. The long-term damage on Ukrainian territory led the international community to condemn the Russian aggression for breaking international law, including the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999). Ukraine ratified the 1954 Hague Convention and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols; Russia ratified the 1954 Hague Convention and its 1954 Protocol. Several international institutions—UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOM, ICOMOS, etc.—provided support to Ukraine.

To ascertain the degree of harm inflicted on cultural goods, UNESCO has periodically drawn up preliminary assessments based on data reported by several credible sources, including satellite images. In Figure 2, data from three distinct periods were grouped together, starting from the first year of the full-scale war. Data show the damaged cultural heritage by type.



***America-Iran Conflict:*** This conflict has caused much damage in the UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace and Structures around famous squares, damaging historical places. In mid-March, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts reported that at least 56 historic sites had been damaged by the war, including museums and cultural heritage monuments. Of the sites where damage has been recorded, 19 are in Iran's capital, Tehran. By the end of the month the figure had increased to 120 museums and heritage sites which had been damaged. Flags bearing the emblem of Blue Shield International were displayed at over 100 heritage sites to discourage damage. The Ministry has deployed 300 experts to assess the damage to Iran's historic sites. On 2 March, a strike on Arg Square damaged the nearby Golestan Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, prompting UNESCO to issue a statement of concern.

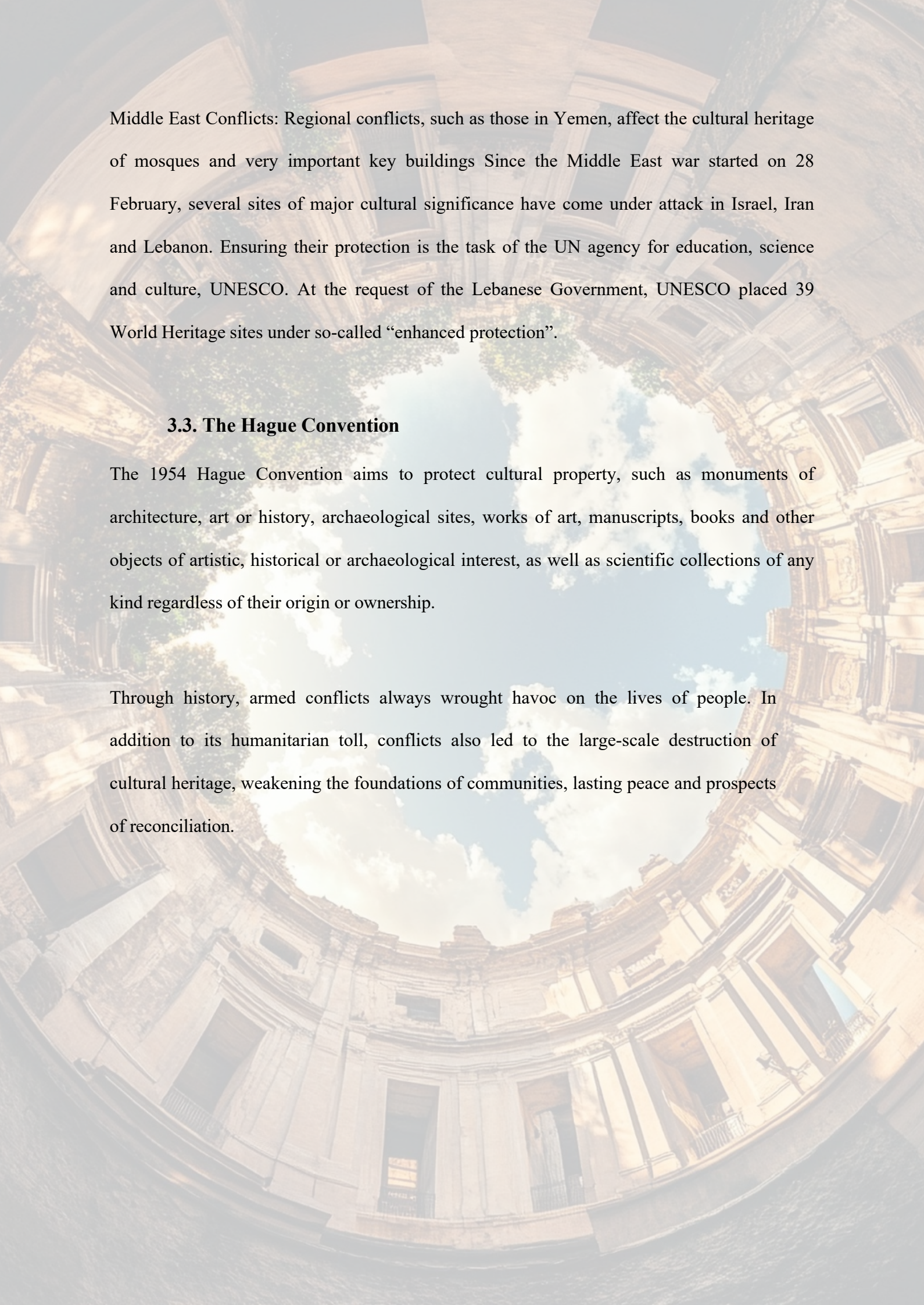
On 2 March, UNESCO issued a statement of "concern over the protection of cultural heritage sites" and shared information about the location of significant heritage sites so that they could be protected. Later that month, a group of heritage professionals called on UNESCO to undertake monitoring of Iran's heritage sites. A group of UK researchers wrote in a letter to *The Times*, noting their concern "not only about the humanitarian impact of the war in Iran, but also about reports of damage to that country's cultural heritage". In April, the Society for Iranian Archaeology published a letter with more than 200 signatures, which "warned that the conduct of the United States and Israel has inflicted irreversible damage on humanity's cultural heritage."

**Palestine-Israel Conflict:** During its invasion of the Gaza Strip beginning in 2023, the military of the state of Israel has destroyed or damaged hundreds of culturally or historically significant buildings, libraries, museums, and other repositories of knowledge in Gaza, alongside the destruction of intangible cultural heritage. Nearly 80% of the buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed and 1.9 million people have been displaced.

There are hundreds of cultural heritage sites in Gaza, including more than 300 architectural heritage sites. In addition to the damaged and destroyed heritage sites, by February 2024 a total of 44 people involved with arts and culture had been killed.

Cultural heritage embodies a people's collective identity. Destroyed sites have included archives, museums, mosques, churches, and cemeteries. Israel's destruction of cultural heritage in Gaza has been conducted in a systematic way. During the war, much of the Old City of Gaza was severely damaged or destroyed by Israeli airstrikes, including the Great Omari Mosque and a compound of the Church of Saint Porphyrius – the oldest mosque and oldest church in Gaza, respectively, as well as other historical sites such as the Ibn Uthman Mosque, the Pasha Palace, the As-Saqqa Palace, the Al-Qissariya Market, and the Hamam al-Sammara. The ancient port of Anthedon was completely destroyed. Museums, including the Al Qarara Cultural Museum, the Akkad Museum, and the Rafah Museum were looted, damaged, or destroyed.

In response to the threat to heritage sites, UNESCO called for the protection of heritage sites during the war. In July 2024, it added 'The Monastery of Saint Hilarion/Tell Umm Amer' to the list of World Heritage Sites and its list of sites in danger. The destruction of cultural heritage sites has been characterised by some as cultural genocide, and South Africa included the destruction of cultural heritage in Gaza as evidence of genocide in its case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.



Middle East Conflicts: Regional conflicts, such as those in Yemen, affect the cultural heritage of mosques and very important key buildings. Since the Middle East war started on 28 February, several sites of major cultural significance have come under attack in Israel, Iran and Lebanon. Ensuring their protection is the task of the UN agency for education, science and culture, UNESCO. At the request of the Lebanese Government, UNESCO placed 39 World Heritage sites under so-called “enhanced protection”.

### **3.3. The Hague Convention**

The 1954 Hague Convention aims to protect cultural property, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest, as well as scientific collections of any kind regardless of their origin or ownership.


Through history, armed conflicts always wrought havoc on the lives of people. In addition to its humanitarian toll, conflicts also led to the large-scale destruction of cultural heritage, weakening the foundations of communities, lasting peace and prospects of reconciliation.

Considering that the preservation of cultural heritage is of great importance for all peoples of the world and thus needs universal protection, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted in 1954 under the auspices of UNESCO. Now widely referred as the 1954 Hague Convention, is the first and the most comprehensive multilateral treaty dedicated exclusively to the protection of cultural heritage in times of peace as well as during an armed conflict.

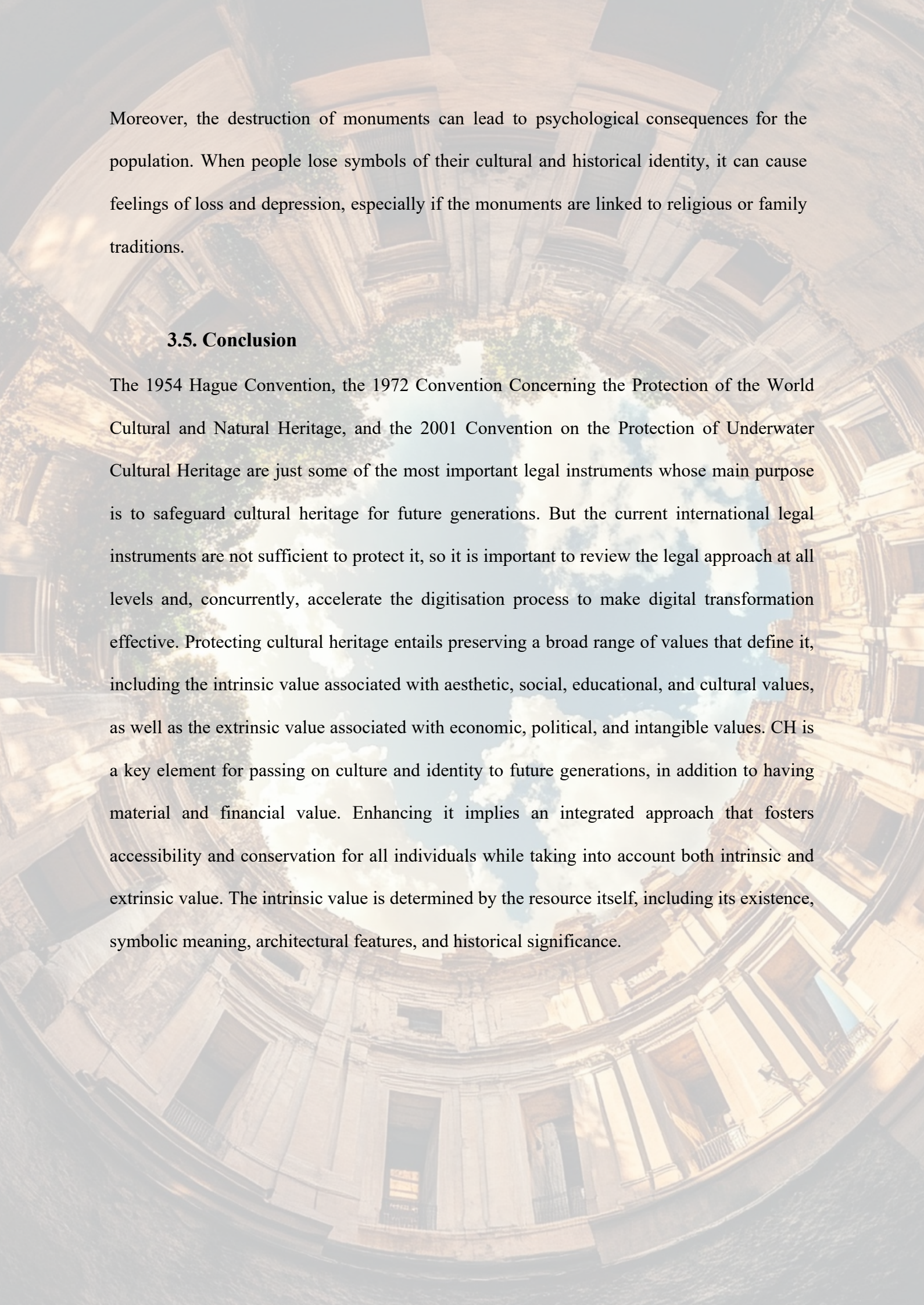
The provisions of the 1954 Convention were supplemented and clarified by two Protocols concluded in 1954 and 1999. All three agreements are part of International Humanitarian Law, which, in the form of further agreements, primarily includes provisions defining the permissible means and methods of warfare and aiming at the widest possible protection of persons not involved in the fighting. In contrast to these parts of International Humanitarian Law, the agreements on the protection of cultural property were drawn up under the auspices of the United Nations (UN); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is primarily responsible for the dissemination and monitoring of compliance. In addition to rules designed to ensure the protection and respect of cultural property during an armed conflict, these agreements also provide for security measures to be implemented in times of peace.

### **3.4. The Impact**

Cultural heritage, encompassing historical monuments, architectural landmarks, and artistic treasures, serves as a vital link between past, present, and future generations. It is the repository of a society's identity, traditions, and shared memory. As such, its preservation is not only an act of safeguarding history but also one of ensuring the continuity of cultural identities. However, armed conflicts have repeatedly proven to be one of the most destructive forces in history, leading to the deliberate or collateral damage of these invaluable symbols of cultural legacy. The destruction of historical monuments during



wars is not a new phenomenon. From ancient civilizations to modern times, conflicts have caused irreversible harm to cultural landmarks. These acts of destruction are often not only collateral but also intentional, with certain parties targeting cultural symbols in an effort to undermine the heritage of their adversaries. As the world becomes increasingly aware of the devastating impact of war on cultural heritage, understanding the mechanisms behind this destruction has become crucial. The destruction of cultural heritage during armed conflicts occurs for several reasons, including targeted attacks, collateral damage from military actions, and the use of monuments as strategic targets. In some cases, monuments are destroyed intentionally in an effort to erase the historical or cultural identity of the enemy, which is especially common in ethnic and religious conflicts. One of the mechanisms of destruction is the use of heavy weaponry such as airstrikes, artillery bombardments, and tank assaults, which inflict massive damage on historic buildings. In other cases, monuments are destroyed due to the use of the area for military installations or fortifications. These actions often take place in ancient cities and settlements, where significant cultural objects are located. Additionally, in some cases, monuments related to specific ethnic or religious identities are destroyed. The destruction of historical monuments during armed conflicts has long-term consequences for society and culture. The loss of cultural objects leads to the disappearance of material evidence of the past, making it more difficult to restore historical memory and cultural context. Such destructions affect not only the local population but also future generations who will have a harder time understanding and interpreting their history. On the other hand, the destruction of cultural objects harms education and tourism. Many historical monuments attract tourists, which can be an important source of income for a country. When these objects are destroyed, the loss of economic revenue often becomes another negative impact of the war.



Moreover, the destruction of monuments can lead to psychological consequences for the population. When people lose symbols of their cultural and historical identity, it can cause feelings of loss and depression, especially if the monuments are linked to religious or family traditions.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

The 1954 Hague Convention, the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage are just some of the most important legal instruments whose main purpose is to safeguard cultural heritage for future generations. But the current international legal instruments are not sufficient to protect it, so it is important to review the legal approach at all levels and, concurrently, accelerate the digitisation process to make digital transformation effective. Protecting cultural heritage entails preserving a broad range of values that define it, including the intrinsic value associated with aesthetic, social, educational, and cultural values, as well as the extrinsic value associated with economic, political, and intangible values. CH is a key element for passing on culture and identity to future generations, in addition to having material and financial value. Enhancing it implies an integrated approach that fosters accessibility and conservation for all individuals while taking into account both intrinsic and extrinsic value. The intrinsic value is determined by the resource itself, including its existence, symbolic meaning, architectural features, and historical significance.

#### **4. Questions to be Addressed**

1. What is cultural heritage and why is it important?
2. Why are cultural heritage sites at risk during wars?
3. What international laws protect cultural heritage?
4. How effective is the 1954 Hague Convention?
5. What role does UNESCO play in protecting cultural heritage?
6. Should countries be punished for damaging cultural heritage?
7. How can cultural sites be protected during ongoing conflicts?
8. Is moving cultural heritage to safer places a good solution?
9. How can countries cooperate to protect heritage in war zones?

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