

The Humanitarian and Security Implications of the Ongoing Conflict in Syria

Term explanation

1. **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** People who have been forced to flee their homes but remain within their country's borders.
2. **Proxy War:** A conflict where two opposing countries or groups support combatants that serve their interests instead of waging war directly.
3. **Extremist Groups:** Organizations that hold radical views and use extreme methods, including violence, to achieve their goals.

General Situation

The ongoing conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, has created a severe humanitarian crisis. The war has resulted in massive displacement, with millions of Syrians becoming refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). Food insecurity and the collapse of healthcare and educational systems have left the civilian population in dire conditions.

Security implications are equally severe, with the involvement of numerous foreign actors turning Syria into a battleground for geopolitical interests. The conflict has empowered extremist groups such as ISIS, which have exploited the chaos to gain territory and influence. The presence of multiple armed factions complicates the security landscape, making peace efforts challenging.

Humanitarian Implications

The humanitarian crisis in Syria is characterized by widespread displacement, food insecurity, and limited access to basic services. According to UNICEF, around 7.5 million children in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance due to the worsening economic crisis, mass displacement, and devastated public infrastructure. The conflict has also led to a significant increase in malnutrition among children and a collapse of the healthcare system. The economic crisis has exacerbated negative coping mechanisms, particularly affecting female-headed households and contributing to the normalization of gender-based violence and child exploitation.

Security Implications

The conflict in Syria has significant security implications, both within the country and regionally. The involvement of multiple external actors, including Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States, has turned the conflict into a proxy war with geopolitical ramifications. The presence of various armed groups, such as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Turkish-backed opposition groups, has led to a fragmented security landscape. The conflict has also facilitated the rise of extremist groups, including ISIS, which has further complicated the security situation.

Foreign Military Support

Foreign military support has played a crucial role in the dynamics of the Syrian conflict. Countries like Turkey have provided significant military aid to rebel groups, including arms and drones, which have been instrumental in their successes. This support has altered the balance of power and prolonged the conflict, leading to increased instability and violence. The involvement of foreign powers has also hindered peace negotiations and efforts to reach a political solution.

Timeline of the Conflict and Its Implications

1. **2011:** Protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime escalate into a civil war.
2. **2012-2013:** The conflict intensifies, leading to significant civilian casualties and displacement. Extremist groups like ISIS gain prominence.
3. **2015:** Russia intervenes militarily in support of Assad, while the U.S. leads a coalition against ISIS.
4. **2016-2017:** Aleppo and other major cities witness intense fighting, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.
5. **2018-2019:** Turkish military operations target Kurdish forces in northern Syria, creating further displacement.
6. **2020:** The COVID-19 pandemic worsens the humanitarian situation, with limited medical infrastructure to respond.
7. **2024:** Syrian rebel groups, overthrow Assad's regime.

Data:

1. **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** As of the end of 2022, there were approximately 6.9 million IDPs in Syria. This number has remained relatively stable since 2014.
2. **Refugees:** Around 6.3 million Syrian refugees are registered with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as of mid-2024. Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, with approximately 2.9 million.
3. **Casualties:** The conflict has resulted in over 500,000 deaths since it began in 2011.
4. **Humanitarian Needs:** By the end of 2023, an estimated 16.7 million people in Syria were in need of humanitarian assistance. (7,5 million children)

Sources:

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