RESEARCH REPORT

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

THE ISSUE OF VIOLENT PROXY MILITIAS

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Basic Overview of the Issue

Proxy militias are forces backed up by third party states. These states support militia groups to gain authority in a region of conflict without sending any of their own military forces. Although states benefit from this situation by not giving any casualties, the militias they support cause further conflict and a tremendous amount of violence. Another reason why states back up militias is because most of them lack the power projection capacity to conduct major military operations. Even major powers like Russia and Iran have limited abilities to send their own forces to a region, not even mentioning the extreme amount of work and fund to coordinate operations that big and demanding. It wouldn't be wrong to say that many of today's wars are in fact proxy wars, with the most recent and well-known being The Syrian Civil War.

Explanation of Important Terms

Proxy

Proxy is the authority to represent someone else, especially in voting and in war.

Proxy War

Deriving from the word proxy, a proxy war is different than a traditional war in which there are only two sides who directly engage in conflict with each other. On the other hand, proxy wars comprise when a major role-player intervenes with the conflicts of two sides by providing financial or military assistance to one side. Major powers benefit from proxy wars as they don't send their own troops to the war.

Militia

A militia is a military force that engages in rebel or terrorist activities in opposition to an army. Many states support local militia groups to gain authority of a region through militia's representation of them. However, militias often pursue their own interests and ignore their supporter's intentions after receiving aids from them.

Syrian Civil War

Although the war in Syria evoked from internal conflicts in the country, the war is not so civil anymore as it has turned into a proxy battle. The war that has started in 2011,

has resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people, and relocation of just as much. What makes Syrian Civil War so complicated is the battle between third party states such as the United States of America, Russia, Turkey, and more. The war is the perfect example of how proxy militias' violent attacks can be extremely harmful and result in irrevocable consequences.

Major Parties Involved

Cameroon: Ambazonia

One of the largest active rebel militia groups in Mid-West Africa, Ambazonia militias have been involved in a crisis that came to be known as the Anglophone crisis. The conflict started in 2017 with separatist militias living in Anglophone regions of Cameroon declared the independence of Ambazonia and started open rebellion against the Cameroon government. The conflict has roots in the departure of British colonial rule, but groups are reported to have formed following the secession of Southern lands by Senegal to Cameroon in mid 2000s. Ambazonia crisis have been addressed by both UK and France, the former of which blamed the latter for mismanaging the conflict, as the Cameroon government is under considerable French diplomatic influence.

Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic, DR Congo: Lord's Resistance Army

Lord's Resistance Army is a Christian rebel group that is active in Central Africa, mainly Uganda, South Sudan and the Central African Republic and DR Congo. Among its goals are theocracy, as well as multi-party democracy and Acholi nationalism, and its operations center around the personality cult of Joseph Kony, the leading founder. The United Nations consider the LRA to be a terrorist organization. The Ugandan government alleges that the Sudanese government has been supplying the organization with military and financial support, while Sudan alleges that Uganda has supported the **Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement**, which was another alleged proxy militia, made peace with in January 2005.

Ethiopia: Somali Regional Government

The Somali Regional Government is the regional governance unit of the Somali

region, a constituent region of the Ethiopian Federal Government. While they are not per se a proxy militia, they do employ and openly train militia group as part of regional ethnic conflicts they have with other Regional Government, like the Oromo Regional Government. As a state, they are in the process of training the militia surveillance and order group Liyu State Police. The Regional Government has previously sponsored militias of the Garre subclan, and the Police is accused of several human right abuses by the international watch group Amnesty International.

Ethiopia: Oromo Regional Government

Much like the Somali Regional Government, the Oromo Regional Government is a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. They hold considerable political and regional power, as they surround the capital Addis Ababa and make up a major part of the ruling party. They are direct sponsors of the proxy militia Oromo Liberation Front, the main armed group in the Oromo region, in addition to several other proxy militias of the Barentu subclan.

Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Chad: Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a Jihadist separatist group that was founded in Maiduguri in late 2002. The group has been notorious for opposing girls' education and what they perceive to be Western culture, and taking measures as extreme as kidnapping, torturing and murdering female school children. The group has since spreaded beyond borders into Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad, where it continues to hold considerable territories. The group has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, and its activities that transcends borders and continents are what makes it considered an international threat, as well as a primary militia.

Kenya, Somalia: Al-Shabaab

Al–Shabaab was the militant wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) that conquered most of southern Somalia in the end of 2006. Regardless of the group's overthrow by Somali and Ethiopian forces in 2007, Al–Shabaab, which is a clan– based rebel and terrorist group has carried on its violent dissent in Southern and Central Somalia. This group has established there permanently and maintained control over strategic locations in those areas by enlisting regional sub–clans and their militias, using convict warfare against the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers and non-governmental aid organizations. As evidenced by the consisted

levels of discord among leadership, Al – Shabaab is not consolidated or hulking in its agenda or aims. In other words, due to the fact that the leaders of Al - Shabaab have several disputes between them, the maintenance and follow up of the day to day task they have in their agenda is not carried out. Its rank-and-file members derive from contrasting clans and the group is affected by clan politics, internal divisions and shifting alliances. The majority of the group's fighters are especially interested in the devoted battle against the TFG and not supportive of global jihad. Al–Shabaab's senior leaders continue to be connected with Al-Qaeda. Al - Shabaab continues its attacks as it describes itself as waging jihad against "enemies of Islam", and is engaged in combat against the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).

Detailed Background of the Issue

In order to understand and analyze the issue effectively, one should dig deeper into the issue by discussing the current major proxies in the world, and their violent effects to their environments. The use of a proxy in the conflicts between states has long been present in the human military history. However, it wasn't until recent history when proxies went on the radar of major world organizations such as United Nations, due to the complexity and violence they bring to already convoluted world matters.

Why do States Use Proxies?

This simple but important question must be answered clearly before moving on with the solutions.

Political Strategies

One of the key answers to the question lies in the political strategies that major world powers follow. Even if these powers have the necessary funding and organization to send their own armed troops to a war region and fight, they fear that a loss in the war would result in the death of their own troops. Moreover, people of the that particular country would start questioning the government, putting the political party in charge and their officials in pretty undesirable situations. On the other hand, people of a nation rarely care about proxies as they have nothing to do with them –most of the citizens are not even aware of the use of proxies by their governments. That's why, using proxies is not only easier, but also more politically and strategically smarter for

most nations.

Costs

As mentioned earlier, use of proxies come much cheaper then sending troops or forces to a region. Sending armed forces to a zone of war requires extreme amount of work and planning, and allows no mistake. Even major world powers simply don't have the commitment and military power to coordinate such operations. Also, funding proxies come with a much cheaper price tag, and a way easier planning process.

Matching Ideologies

Another reason why states use proxies is to spread the ideologies they adopt to the regions where there are multiple and distinct ideologies present. This allows them to manifest their powers through the representation of their outlooks. The most popular follower of this reasoning is arguably Iran. Iran wants to advance their Shaia Islamist approach by funding proxies that follow similar Islamist guidelines. For instance, Iran backs up Hezbollah, an Islamist militia group in Lebanon. However, Iran is not the only one that follows the same path. Even though Russia does not admit, it was confirmed that they used their proxies in the conflict of Ukraine to escalate their nationalist ambitions.

Disadvantages of Proxies

Proxies may seem advantageous and highly beneficial for the states that are supporting them, but this is not always true. Supporting a proxy comes with many risks that may eventually posses risks to their supporters.

Independence

When third party forces donate funds, arms and equipment to proxies, they also give them the absolute freedom to do what ever they desire. Despite the power hierarchy, some proxies choose to pursue their own interests and simply ignore the aims of their representatives after receiving the huge sums of donations. And although a stronger proxy means a bigger power for the patron of the proxy, it is also riskier since stronger proxies have a greater chance to violate what they are told to do. Furthermore, the independent actions of proxies may drag the relevant state to unwanted issues on

behalf of the proxy. Multiple wars have started because of this in the 20th century; Palestinian proxy militias sparked conflicts with Israel, and dragged their Arab supporters such as Egypt and Syria with them, causing unwanted tension between two sides.

Corruption

The corruption that lies within proxies is brutal and selfish. Raising from the independence they get after receiving donations, some proxies choose not to follow the guidelines of their patrons. For instance, although United States spent millions for training their proxies in Syria, none of them actually turned up to fight, leaving the US in disappointment and millions of Dollars in loss. Although a state can impose strict monitoring or sanctions to the proxies in a case like this one, those actions will also bring up the costs and result in the need of more interference with the proxies.

Current Violent Proxy Militias

Currently, most of the proxies are located in the Middle East. Many world powers regularly supported their proxies as the ongoing conflicts in the region remain unsolved.

Proxies in Syria

Syria currently has a good amount of proxy militias backed up by numerous world powers. So far, countries including France, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States have all intervened in some amount. Some of them provided money, arms, and training to rebel groups while others helped to power a local group. The two sides that are in conflict may be described as Secularists, which comprise of proxies of Russia, US, and UAE, and Islamists, which comprise of proxies of Turkey, Iran, and Qatar. However, the conflicts further sub-categorize to several instances of disparities between two particular nations'. For instance, problems between Iran and United States have been on the rise since the start of the war. United States regularly blames

Iran's proxies for performing attacks to civilians and US interests while pursuing and spreading Shaia Islamism. On the other hand, Iran also accuses United States' proxies for holding terrorist attacks in Syria and weakening the Islamic Revolution. Speaking of the US, they also played an active role in the war through their Kurdish proxies, mainly People's Protection Units (YPG). United States provided YPG with weaponry to battle with ISIS and Assad. However, this critical event dragged Turkey further into the matter as they have declared YPG as a terrorist organization. Therefore, Americans support of YPG was unacceptable for the Turkish government as the country has been suffering from terrorism for a long time. To sum up, proxies not only performed violent attacks that resulted in the death of thousands of civilians, but they also increased tension between multiple states, including NATO allies US and Turkey.

Proxies in Iraq

Iraq is another region in the Middle East where proxies have been present for a long time. Iran has established numerous proxy militias in the country. Their proxies has grown and grown, and came to point where they almost entirely control the security infrastructures in Iraq. Some of Iran's proxies turned into political parties while keeping their military status active. Iran's proxies such as Hezbollah, The Badr Organization, and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) has been possessing a threat to the sovereignty of Iraq, as Iran has direct control of the security measures in the country.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	Description of Event
1991	Somali Civil War starts, marking the beginning of a decades-long conflict that continues to this day.
1998	The Great War of Africa starts, evolving from a domestic conflict of the DR Congo into a conflict involving eight different African nations. Official numbers estimate around 2 to 3 million deaths during the War.

2001	The African Union is formed out of the Organisation of African Unity, due to the OAU being deemed ineffectual and totalitarian-leaning.
2009	Boko Haram members begin assasinations and major kidnappings in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon.
2010	The Sudan-Chad conflict comes to an end, marking an era that gave birth to political instability and numerous militia forces.
2011	Arab Spring starts in Tunisia, followed by civil uprisings in Algeria and Egypt.
2011	Libyan Civil War erupts an ends within a year, while violence continues to this day.
December 15 2013	South Sudanese Civil War erupts between government forces and the Sudanese Liberation Movement-in-Opposition.
April 26 2015	Burundian unrest begins, pitting the NATO and EU alliances against Russian-Chinese interests, bringing the opposition forces of National Forces of Liberation into active conflict.
June 26 2015	ISIL Insurgency in Tunisia starts
9 September 2017	The Anglophone Crisis starts, pitting the Southern regions of Cameroon against government forces, as well as birthing diplomatic skirmishes between UK and France.

Relevant International Documents

- Adopted by the Security Council, 13 July 2018 (S/RES/2428) – Extension of Sanctions on South Sudan due to Continued Unrest and support to illicit military groups
- Agreement Between Federal Government of Somalia and Jubba Delegation [Ethiopia-backed military group], 20 August 2013
- Agreement Between the Government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement-Sudan on the Basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, 6 April 2013
- Agreement Between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a [Sufi paramilitary group], 15 March 2010

Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Proxy militia groups, as the name suggests, depend greatly on their respective sponsors. Most of the time, their sponsors continue to invest in them due to the groups allowing for the advancement of the sponsor's agenda. They are particularly easy to cultivate and profit off of, as they form in politically unstable regions and countries with little intelligence surveillance. In Africa, regional alliances and power balances greatly affect how militias form and disappear.

Throughout the continent, different countries had different approaches to combatting the proliferation of military groups. Enlisting the help of allied countries are one of the most common ways – as neighboring countries would greatly benefit from stable neighbors. For example, Uganda sought military assistance by its neighbors DR Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan in quelling the Lord's Resistance Army uprising. The LAR was supported by Sudan until 2002, which effectively acted as their sponsor. Other attempts included amending broken relations with sponsoring countries; much like the way Ethiopia dealt with its Northern secessionist insurgencies by ending the border War with Eritrea. Organisations like Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab are harder to deal with, as they are not openly supported by any regional force. Countries have resorted to the help of international coalitions in the battle against Jihadist groups.

Solution Alternatives

As outlined in the previous part, usual solutions center around strengthening military and diplomatic relations. The UN has previously took part in quelling the insurgencies through facilitation and brokerage of peace agreements and/or regional operations instated by Peacekeeping divisions. For example, in the LAR insurgency, the UN had put the MONUC under military usage, and helped largely with operations carried out by countries. Peacekeeping operations are not solely instated due to insurgencies and are only deployed (especially in the past years) in situations where international support is necessary for a state to maintain its function.

If the birth and proliferation of proxy militas can be considered a natural result of diplomatic problems, it would be helpful to search for the root cause of the conflict, and perhaps for reasons in the sponsors' agenda. Concessions might be necessary to prevent the flow of monetary and military help from sponsors to insurgent groups, especially since in conflict-trodden regions it is much destructive to immediately resort to sanctions. However, the UN has used sanctions in the past as a way to stop the flow of aid. Specific insurgencies must naturally be dealt with specifically, but international frameworks and guidelines on belligerent and defendant states can be instated to ease future processes.

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