Protecting International Cultural Heritage and Personnel under Siege:
Problems and Prospects for US Organizations

Thomas G. Weiss

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
Brian Michael Lione
and Ella Weiner

A NATION STAYS ALIVE WHEN IT'S CULTURE STAYS ALIVE.

NATIONAL MUSEUM of ASIAN ART
✸ Smithsonian

NATIONAL
MUSEUM of
ASERT ART
☀ Smithsonian

Contents

Foreword

When the Biden administration announced its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, staff at the Smithsonian Institution understood the potential threats to colleagues and collections. At the National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA), our particular concern was with our cognate institution, the National Museum of Afghanistan (NMA). Working with colleagues across the Smithsonian, Department of State, embassies, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and other cultural heritage organizations, the NMAA formulated an integrated "Program for Afghan Art and Cultural Exchange."

The central components were to be the NMAA's conservation assessment of objects, a long-term loan to NMAA, and opportunities in the United States for training Afghan museum professionals. The aim was to inform and facilitate both conservation and art historical research as well as an exhibition in Washington, DC (and then elsewhere). The capacity-building element of the program was not only to benefit the cultural sector in Afghanistan but also to deepen the Smithsonian's understanding of the objects in its own collections.

The swift takeover by the Taliban in August 2021 exacerbated the problems of inadequate communication and coordination among potential partners and therefore prevented the execution of the proposed program. The result left both the NMA's treasured collection and the local museum community at risk.

While the efforts were unsuccessful, the process nonetheless stimulated rethinking the NMAA's experience and future strategic planning to reflect the following conclusions:

• Despite numerous national and international organizations with mandates to protect cultural heritage, the sector is not fully prepared to act in a coordinated manner in response to cultural crises with humanitarian and security dimensions.

• There is much goodwill among individuals in intergovernmental (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), educational and cultural institutions, foundations, and government agencies. Absent a systematic approach, however, the ability to make a significant and sustainable impact is limited.

• Having a network of key constituencies with established and clear communications in place is critical to effective and expeditious responses.

• Capacity building—including training for professionals who can inventory and digitize collections—is crucial as a bulwark against circumstances that imperil cultural heritage.

• Due to its size, standing, and ties to cultural and governmental entities, the Smithsonian Institution might serve as a pillar of international as well as national efforts.

Afghanistan was not the first, nor will it be the last, country to suffer from armed conflict and violence with the accompanying threats to its cultural heritage, as well as to the lives and livelihoods of its cultural workers and citizens. That is why we are grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which acknowledged the need to identify and comprehend the nature of the responses and non-responses, and of successful and unsuccessful efforts, to respect the twin imperatives of safeguarding human life and cultural heritage. The pertinence of that task became even more evident with the latest Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which coincided with launching this project and permeated many conversations.

We are also grateful for the candid cooperation of the many colleagues interviewed for this report. Their willingness to share their unvarnished views about recent experience was encouraging and essential for the analyses, diagnoses, and prescriptions in the following pages. It is humbling to work in a field that is populated by so many committed colleagues.

Finally, this report is the fruit of the dedicated efforts of a small team at the Smithsonian, led by Christine Begley, Senior Advisor at the National Museum of Asian Art. Let me especially thank the report's lead author, a friend and distinguished analyst, Tom Weiss, who deftly focused and led the study. The work builds on and was greatly informed by his recent Getty publication that is now an essential resource for the field, *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*, co-edited with Jim Cuno.

Chase F. Robinson

Director, National Museum of Asian Art

January 2024

Executive Summary

This report compiles research undertaken for two main purposes: to survey and understand the pressing issues facing the cultural heritage field in protecting and preserving tangible cultural heritage and those who steward it in zones of armed conflict and violence; and to propose steps that would improve the field's effectiveness. In-depth interviews with some sixty practitioners and experts reveal areas of strength and weakness in the field, stories of success and disappointment, opportunities for further research, and a widespread commitment to enhance and expand practices that are effective and sustainable.

The genesis for this applied research project was the continuing and widespread destruction and looting of cultural heritage due to political or military violence over recent decades. The obvious need emerges to identify and comprehend the nature of the responses and non-responses, and of successful and unsuccessful efforts, to advance the twin imperatives of safeguarding human life and cultural heritage. The pertinence of that challenge became even more obvious with the most recent Russian incursion into Ukraine in February 2022, which coincided with the inception of this project.

Research focused on the endangered cultural heritage of Asia and the Middle East, the National Museum of Asian Art's geographical focus and the region whose citizens and heritage have suffered extraordinary damage from violence in the post–Cold War era. The findings and analysis in these pages are, however, applicable across other geographic areas. Many of the political, economic, humanitarian, philanthropic, military, and administrative challenges are relevant across the board.

Moreover, the efforts to protect cultural heritage necessarily are global. While this initial research focuses on US organizations, it also reflects the perspectives of some essential non-US partners. As major players in preventing, responding, and recovering cultural heritage, improvements in US-based institutions would be an essential component of and serve as a building block for improved global heritage governance.

The report proceeds through four main substantive discussions. Chapter 1 begins by taking the temperature in the field, and it provides justifications for an affirmative answer to the query "The Time for Imagination and Initiatives?" Chapter 2 undertakes an undoubtedly overly ambitious task but seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of the range of "Challenges In-country and Outside for Tangible Heritage and Local Professionals." Chapter 3 endeavors to spell out insights that we have gleaned from our interviews and provides evidence and suggestions that respond positively to the query "Light at the End of the Tunnel?" The final Chapter 4 briefly explores "Where Do We Go from Here?"

The shortcomings from such a partial and qualitative survey are obvious. The biases, experiences, and realities that necessarily enter subjective appreciations reflect the size, orientation, and ideology of individuals within implementing agencies; they also have an impact on the characterization of the pluses and minuses and overall influence of specific procedures, delays, requirements, and guidelines. That said, many aspects of the analysis are relevant for numerous implementing agencies, whatever their dimensions, missions, or locations.

One overarching conclusion emerges: the need to explore the feasibility of a voluntary network that could enhance communication and foster (or inspire) applied research within an expanding and decentralized ecosystem of organizations and initiatives. In these ways, it could help ameliorate the protection of immovable and movable tangible cultural heritage and those who steward them.

The Monument to Duke Richelieu (Ivan Martos, 1828) in Odesa surrounded by sandbags as a technique to protect the sculpture during the conflict with Russia. Odesa, Ukraine, March 2022. Photo by Nina Lyashonok / Ukrinform / Future Publishing via Getty Images.

Introduction

This report explores institutional responses to the pressing challenges of preventing damage to cultural heritage resulting from violent conflict. Or, to state the task more positively, how can we better protect heritage and humans—how can we halt the erasure of history and its subjects? Drawing connections between attacks on people and their cultural heritage can help shape policy as well as more appropriate responses by the heritage, humanitarian, and security communities. This report draws on the definition of "cultural heritage" guiding the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), but with a focus on tangible heritage.[1]

The genesis for this project was in the numerous examples over recent decades of destruction and looting of cultural heritage due to political or military violence and armed conflict. The recent experience of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA) stimulated rethinking the state of the field after a thwarted effort to protect works of art in the National Museum of Afghanistan (NMA) and the professionals who cared for those objects.

Afghanistan was traumatic in many ways but only one recent illustration of a country suffering from violent conflict and the resulting damage to its cultural heritage, accompanied by the tragic threats to the lives and livelihoods of its cultural workers and nationals. Indeed, over the last few decades international observers have witnessed the tragic and dramatic destruction amidst violent conflicts. These conflicts are not the only cause—natural disasters, climate change, looting, unrestrained urbanization, myopic development decisions, and neglect also share the blame. Many of these causes are linked and often precede or exacerbate war and violence.

That said, the focus here is on the immediate cause of the bulk of recent destruction; five years ago widespread armed conflicts explained about half of the sites on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger.[2] Interviewees noted that especially unsettling for heritage professionals were the 2001 dynamiting of the sixth-century Buddhas of Bamiyan, the looting of the Baghdad National Museum during the initial US occupation in 2003, and the 2015 attacks on the Mosul Cultural Museum. The Carnegie Corporation of New York's foresight in supporting this applied research became even more apparent at the outset of this research project in February 2022 when Russia re-invaded Ukraine.

Readers should keep in mind two decisions made at the outset of the project. First, the efforts to protect cultural heritage necessarily are global. While this initial applied research focuses on US entities, it also reflects the perspectives of some essential non-US partners. As major players in preventing, responding, and recovering cultural heritage, improvements in US-based institutions would be an essential component of and serve as a building block for improved global performance.

Second, because of the paucity of comparable data and metrics across time and space, we chose to rely on a qualitative methodology, including structured interviews with some sixty persons from some forty institutions or large units within them in addition to a much larger number of individuals who have weighed in on various aspects of the research questionnaire. To ensure candor, interviews were confidential and unrecorded. We provide a list of institutional (but not personal) names in Annex 1 and a short list of research questions that guided interviews in Annex 2. The backgrounds of contributors and frequently used abbreviations are found in Annex 3 and Annex 4. The summaries of views emerging from conversations and anonymous quotations speak for themselves. There are minimal citations of scholarship and policy commentary, although both have burgeoned; a 2023 annotated bibliography from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an essential resource and obviated the need for extensive citing of literature.[3]

The driving motivation for the project was to develop an understanding of the current pressing issues facing the

cultural heritage field in effectively protecting and preserving objects and workers and begin to think through what could be done to address them. This includes laying the groundwork for considering a voluntary network that could help ameliorate the protection of immovable and movable tangible heritage and of cultural professionals in times of political or military crises with humanitarian dimensions.

An essential but often overlooked component of collaborative activities for this sector is the protection of cultural workers—curators, conservators, site managers, collection managers, artists, museum directors, educators, administrators, and more—whose lives are imperiled by continuing their labors and remaining in their home countries. A network of organizations could provide guidance on storage and evacuation of objects as well as assist with documentation, travel, and placement for colleagues to continue meaningfully their work even when and while displaced. Artisans, art-makers, and culture keepers are a much wider category of individuals under threat whose plight necessitates consideration but falls outside the scope of this report.

This dual approach—helping to protect heritage as well as the professionals threatened in violent contexts—maximizes the opportunities for operational success in the medium term; countries will thereby retain both the experts and historic objects needed to rebuild their societies and continue to celebrate their heritage. The human costs of heritage destruction are borne by vulnerable people not only in the short run but in the longer run as well because it is ruinous for cultural identity and social cohesion, deepens animosities, and impairs post-crisis recovery.

This project proceeded with an understanding of the important work that is ongoing within the Smithsonian Institution in the field of cultural heritage protection and its position within it. The efforts of the Smithsonian's Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI) are specifically designed to protect cultural heritage and respond in times of disasters. Its success—unanimously acknowledged by interviewees—in building networks, training personnel, and providing on-the-ground assistance has provided leadership to the field and done much to raise awareness of the situational urgency not only within the Smithsonian but also with lawmakers, funders, and global actors. Other Smithsonian units, particularly the Museum Conservation Institute (MCI) and the Office of International Relations (OIR), also have deep expertise in training international colleagues and developing strong networks and partnerships. One specific goal of this applied research is to build upon this institutional foundation and maximize the Smithsonian's impact in protecting cultural heritage and professionals globally.

This project emphasizes the endangered cultural heritage throughout Asia and the Middle East, the NMAA's geographical focus and the region whose citizens and heritage have suffered extraordinary damage from violence in the post–Cold War era. The findings and analysis in these pages are, however, applicable across other geographic areas. Most of the political, economic, humanitarian, philanthropic, military, and administrative challenges are relevant across-the-board.

The report proceeds through four main substantive discussions. Chapter 1 begins by taking the temperature in the field, and it provides justifications for an affirmative answer to the query "The Time for Imagination and Initiatives?" Chapter 2 undertakes an undoubtedly overly ambitious task but seeks to contribute to an improved understanding of the range of "Challenges In-country and Outside for Tangible Heritage and Local Professionals." Chapter 3 endeavors to spell out insights that we have gleaned from our interviews and provides evidence and suggestions that respond positively to the query "Light at the End of the Tunnel?" The final Chapter 4 explores "Where Do We Go from Here?"

A group of heritage professionals and emergency managers receive training as part of the Heritage Emergency And Response Training (HEART) program, developed by the Heritage Emergency National Task Force, which is co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative and FEMA. Photo by Michael R. Barnes, Smithsonian Institution.

US-based conservator Kent Severson teaches heavy lifting techniques to the Nimrud Rescue Team members. In 2017, the Smithsonian partnered with the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) to train the Nimrud Rescue Team to lead on-site recovery and stabilization of the ancient Neo Assyrian archaeological city of Nimrud. This Smithsonian-led training at the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage used construction debris as an analog to the ancient fragments the team would go on to recover at Nimrud. Photo by Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage.

1 "Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater), intangible cultural heritage embedded into cultural, and natural heritage artefacts, sites or monuments." https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/cultural-heritage.

2 Noam Levin, Saleem Ali, David Crandall, and Salit Kark, "World Heritage in Danger: Big Data and Remote Sensing Can Help Protect Sites in Conflict Zones," Global Environmental Change 55 (March 2019): 97–104.

3 Annalisa Bolin, Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: A Literature Review (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2023), https://www.ssrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Literature-Review-Academic-Network-Cultural-Heritage-and-Violence-f.pdf.

Top: Conflict is not the only cause of damage to cultural heritage—natural disasters, climate change, looting, urbanization, and neglect also share the blame. A successful effort by UNESCO relocated the temples of Abu Simbel in 1968 when they were imperiled by the construction of the Aswan Dam. They are pictured here being cared for by a local professional in the new location in 2023. Photo by Rafaëlla Waasdorp / Unsplash. Bottom: Temple of Ramesses II, Abu Simbel, Egypt, ca. 1860s. Photo by Antonio Beato / Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 1992.307.

1

The Time for Imagination and Initiatives?

The point of departure for this research undertaking was the proposition that the third decade of the twenty-first century presents a potentially propitious moment to examine how best to improve global responses to assaults on cultural heritage. "It's a great moment to rethink," in the supportive opinion of one interviewee. The topic is not new: cascading events starting in the tumultuous 1990s and continuing in this century have revived an interest that seemingly had receded after World War II and the subsequent entry into force of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Virtually everyone interviewed agreed that the subject had become increasingly topical over the last two to three decades; it was no longer a niche issue with pertinence mainly for card-carrying members of the heritage community. The shift from ministries of culture and museums toward ministries of defense and foreign affairs was evident and represented a positive development that connoted, in the words of one interviewee, the desirable "shift in power and relevance" of protecting cultural heritage.

Whether new to the field or veterans, interlocutors observed that despite the pandemic-induced parochialism and the proliferation of new nationalisms and populisms, the current moment nonetheless afforded an opportunity to emphasize the universal importance of immovable and movable cultural heritage. One official ventured that "tipping point" was an overstatement of the shift away from the relative obscurity of cultural heritage during the Cold War. Nonetheless, the significance attached to heritage destruction in such older conflicts as Guatemala and Cambodia has subsequently assumed more importance than during their active civil wars. In retrospect, the looting and destruction in such armed conflicts have become more visible as the media and the public have become increasingly aware of and concerned with historical and ongoing destruction.

Several interviewees mentioned, for instance, that the 2022 statements about cultural heritage by the Group of 20 (G-20) in Indonesia and by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would have been implausible absent the growing awareness and concern.[4]

Additional evidence for this geopolitical shift was the establishment of such new funds as UNESCO's Emergency Heritage Fund in 2015 and the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH), a multilateral, private, non-profit fund founded in 2017 on the initiative of France and Abu Dhabi.

While coverage of cultural destruction was once spotty in the media, now *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other major news outlets as well as cable networks cover heritage destruction in-depth and in real time. Especially shocking to specialists and non-specialists alike was the saber-rattling and norm-busting rhetoric early in 2020 by then–US president Donald J. Trump, who threatened to destroy Iranian cultural sites after Tehran claimed it would retaliate for the assassination of Major-General Qassim Suleimani. Although he later backed off, the initial declaration as well as dissent from the US Department of State (DoS) and Department of Defense (DoD) ironically helped draw attention to the crucial importance for cultural heritage of respecting international humanitarian law (IHL) in violent times of political and military turmoil.

Indeed, IHL featured in many conversations because of its centrality to understanding contemporary and historical responses. However, the focus was less on the body of public international law being inadequate, and more on the national application and implementation of such laws pertaining to cultural heritage, including the core texts on deposit at UNESCO: the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, including the first and second

protocols[5]; the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property[6]; and the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.[7]

Put another way, there is wide consensus that the problem internationally is not the paucity of legal instruments; instead, it is the shortage of political will to enforce existing law. Taking advantage of the moment was judged essential to move toward more effective enforcement of public international law. Ukraine was merely the most recent illustration that IHL's protective mechanisms are dependent on the willingness of parties, particularly aggressors, to abide by them. It also was a "turning point," according to one analyst, because it was a painful reminder that we could no longer assume that contemporary heritage attacks were confined to civil wars. Another called it a "canary in the coal mine" that presaged destruction with a vengeance but no real consequences thus far for the Russian perpetrators.

Discussions also reflected a growing preference for cultural "heritage" rather than "property"—indeed, a growing conviction about the importance of that preference. This more inclusive term stresses stewardship and trusteeship rather than the accidents of history, current ownership, or contemporary national borders. The 1972 definition outlines the "outstanding universal value" of heritage that elevates it to protected status; the 1954 definition implies something similar by pointing to "the cultural heritage of every people." The widely shared human value of immovable and movable cultural heritage in these two conventions is not limited to those who have inherited it directly or indirectly. They both contrast starkly with the narrower and state-centric 1970 convention that makes "cultural property" contingent upon that designation by a state; the 1970 label thus stresses current ownership not stewardship, and narrow rather than universal values.[8]

In addition to highlighting the well-developed legal instruments governing cultural heritage protection, several interlocutors pointed to the contemporary convergence of two factors that have altered the politics of protection. The first is that destruction has captured the attention not just of curators, archaeologists, anthropologists, and heritage specialists but also of major media outlets and popular audiences; thus, political leverage can result. Professionals naturally

sound a clarion call when heritage is at risk, but the wider international recognition of the scale and significance of contemporary damage is consequential for advancing public policy as well as specific responses. The real-time demolitions of the Mostar Bridge in 1993 and the Buddhas of Bamiyan in 2001, for instance, were among the first visible cases to draw worldwide attention. Even before the Russo-Ukrainian War, the issue remained in the media limelight and in the public's awareness due to continued attacks by Al-Qaida and the Islamic State (ISIS). Social media sophistication facilitated cultural destruction's emergence as a distressing component of their "brand."

Indeed, the precise timing and targeting of heritage attacks can be weaponized as part of propaganda and information warfare. Several interviewees pointed to the strategic manipulation of information and the nefarious impact of social media. The performative value of destruction—that is, the recruitment benefit to the destroyers—contrasts with the substantial costs to local and global citizens. The main targets of cultural heritage destruction are the communities associated with it. However, publics worldwide are increasingly relevant, and attacks can be orchestrated specifically to target the global media and its audiences. In addition to facilitating recruitment, ISIS outflanked other Islamist groups by flaunting their highly performative medievalism.

The second major factor altering the politics of protection is that the destruction of cultural heritage has become strongly associated in the public's mind and in governmental policies with terrorist groups. Protection of cultural heritage thus benefits from its association with the high politics of international security, which are invariably the highest priority items in any state's foreign policy. Given the emotive power of the Global War on Terror in the post-9/11 landscape, the destruction of sites and antiquities has become sufficiently politicized to draw the ire of many groups ranging from UN member states to domestic political actors, from international NGOs to readers and viewers of the news.

Governments in general, and the US Government in particular, frame counteracting the destruction of cultural heritage by terrorists as an essential front in countering violent extremism and interventions on behalf of culture as a hamper on terrorist financing. UN Security Council resolution 2347 is the most explicit of UN statements and precedents focused on the protection of cultural

heritage. Passed unanimously in March 2017, its operative passage begins, the Security Council "deplores and condemns the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, inter alia destruction of religious sites and artefacts, as well as the looting and smuggling of cultural property from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites, in the context of armed conflicts, notably by terrorist groups."[9]

Governments are amenable to dedicating substantial resources—from local police and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)—to protect cultural heritage from circulating illegally in the world marketplace. While the resources are modest in comparison with the war on drugs, for instance, the counterterrorism framing nonetheless is politically powerful and facilitates resource mobilization. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is "pushing out borders," in one interlocutor's image, to enforce solutions for what former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan aptly described as "problems without passports."[10]

More than one observer pointed to an irony of ongoing efforts, including this research undertaking: as the world grows smaller and more connected, modern states increasingly claim exclusive ownership over riches that should be shared, namely universal cultural heritage. Cosmopolitanism, or cultural internationalism, has become more suspect with cultural nationalism and postcolonial critiques dominating many conversations, including in major international forums. But the intimate link between attacking bricks and blood, or murdering history and people, provides a way to bring closer together the tasks of protecting heritage and humans, of minimizing the differences in perspectives about ownership and value. The international political contestation about the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention, for example, often reflects stark differences about when and where to assist vulnerable populations whose political authorities cannot or will not protect them—to wit, the explosive debates about intervening or not in Libya, the Balkans, Myanmar, and Syria.

In this context, some mentioned the sequence behind the nineteenth-century German poet Heinrich Heine's oft-cited words that inspired Raphael Lemkin, the drafter of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: "Burning books is not

the same as burning bodies . . . but when one intervenes . . . against mass destruction of churches and books one arrives just in time to prevent the burning of bodies."[11]

The link between attacks on people and heritage recalls such moments as Kristallnacht, the Third Reich's November 1938 pogrom and cultural destruction, one of far too many examples from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Russian war crimes of consciously destroying and stealing Ukrainian cultural heritage were daily bill of fare in the media during interviews. That destruction has featured in the UN General Assembly's six condemnations of Moscow's actions, more specifically still by the UN Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine whose report documented an array of war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.[12] While the International Criminal Court's (ICC) March 2023 arrest warrant only referred to Putin and his commissioner for children's rights for the abduction of children,[13] the war crimes against heritage likely will surface as ICC Prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan pursues an investigation begun in March 2022 with referrals from forty-three States Parties to the Rome Treaty, the founding document of the ICC.[14]

The cultural elements of Ukraine's ongoing tragedy arose in many interviews, which illustrated the importance of revisiting the dual emphases in Lemkin's work that began in the 1930s in the League of Nations and continued at Duke Law School—namely, the relevance not only of biological (i.e., human life) *but also* cultural genocide.[15] Although the damage is far greater, UNESCO has compiled an ever-growing list for Ukraine that in late December 2023 listed some 334 major cultural properties that have been damaged or destroyed since Moscow's onslaught began on 24 February 2022.[16] There is as yet no inventory of artworks stolen by Russian forces, but there is ample evidence (including photographic images) of their magnitude and purpose. Accompanied by atrocities, the deliberate destruction and theft of culture constitutes what former UNESCO director-general Irina Bokova first called "cultural cleansing."[17] Vladimir Putin is a new type of vandal who does not recognize the cultural distinctiveness of Ukraine; because its art and culture are supposedly Russian, moving pieces to Russia thus is not "destruction" per se.

Several interviewees noted that this crisis nevertheless echoed the logic behind numerous other contemporary and historical examples. The cumulative and conscious destruction of a whole cultural life is an essential component of a total war strategy; in addition, looting and smuggling provided an opportunity to monetize cultural assets.

Long before this crisis, analysts across disciplines as well as practitioners of all stripes had begun to move away from viewing violence- and conflict-related attacks on heritage as only a cultural tragedy and toward understanding their vital security and humanitarian dimensions as well.[18] The evolution is notable as well from the second half of the twentieth century when those concerned about heritage destruction stressed the negative cumulative impacts of poorly designed economic development combined with lack of investment in maintenance and accelerated environmental deterioration. A prominent example was emphatically symbolized by the campaign to save the iconic Abu Simbel that was imperiled by the construction of the Aswan Dam in Egypt in the 1960s. A more recent, widespread, and complicating variable was climate change.

It is critical to repeat that the focus here is on how heritage is intertwined with peoples and their identities, not just art for art's sake. The result has been a slowly developing but noticeable shift—among lawyers, social scientists, heritage specialists, humanitarians, the military, and policy analysts—away from the understandable yet narrow efforts to safeguard cultural heritage only for aesthetic or historical reasons. One interlocutor described the broader framing as "a generational shift"; its protection is integral to the strategies and tactics for succoring human beings as well as fostering international peace and security.

Hence, defense and foreign affairs ministries as well as international humanitarian organizations cannot overlook what NATO and analysts have recently labelled "the security-heritage nexus."[19] A recent report from the European Union, for example, indicates "how the topic of cultural heritage has continued to be integrated in the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)."[20] In addition, one interlocutor pointed to the value of protecting cultural heritage in the "strategic competition" with Iran, Russia, and China; it provides an answer to the military's query of "so what?" The mandates for both NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the UN's

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) contained important military tasks to protect cultural heritage. In addition, the 1954 Hague Convention requires respect by domestic and occupying military forces. Within the military—from the service academies and war colleges to command structures—cultural heritage protection is not viewed as a separate issue but a means to help realize mandates, at least when being done well.

Indications of the auspicious current moment entered many conversations. Scholarly and policy analyses have burgeoned, especially since 2015; they reflect, among other things, the effort to document and understand the stated objectives of destroying a people as a people. According to some dissertation advisers, openings for jobs in this field for PhDs are another indication of its relevance. One interlocutor cited a more specific illustration of the issue's visibility and longer-term salience: after being made aware of the 2003 looting of the museum in Baghdad, Egyptians provided a human shield around the National Museum in Cairo during the 2011 post–Tahrir Square demonstrations, which prevented some material from disappearing on the parallel market.

Still other interviewees referred to additional indications of the current relevance of moving vigorously and taking the initiative. One dominant view was the visibility of the spectacular destructions of Palmyra, the Mostar Bridge, the fabled mosques, mausoleums, and libraries of Timbuktu, the Mosul Museum, and the Bamiyan Buddhas. While mobilization around iconic World Heritage sites is understandable, interviewees insisted that attention also be accorded to less well-known structures—Uyghur mud-brick temples, Christian village cemeteries in the Middle East and Nagorno-Karabakh, local Rohingya mosques, Ottoman heritage in Crimea—that are integral to local identities.

Impressions to be avoided are, of course, that outsiders know best what heritage is valuable enough to merit attention and intervention, and that saving stones takes precedence over saving lives. Interlocutors emphasized that local views should be integral to decision making, and that cultural heritage be better prioritized in crisis responses, but that it not override human protection. Because protecting cultural heritage anchors people in specific locations, the direct connection between that task and reducing refugee flows was an additional

concern. Again, the intertwining of people and their heritage was deemed essential.

The work by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) for the Responsibility to Protect vulnerable populations was pertinent for many interviewees.[21] The commissioners formulated a three-part Responsibility to Protect—prevention, reaction, and reconstruction—which is evocative of the vocabulary applied by cultural specialists to the protection of immovable and movable heritage as well as to the protection and capacity building of local custodians. Moreover, the major impediments to robust international action to protect cultural heritage resemble those to protect people: the claimed sacrosanct nature of sovereignty for state perpetrators and the significant rejection of international law and norms by many non-state actors.

The themes of prevention, reaction, and reconstruction—the three phases of R2P—appear across interviews alongside more nuanced approaches to post-conflict recovery, stabilization, investment, and conservation.

Many of the interlocutors working in US institutions repeatedly cited Iraq and Afghanistan, which involved two decades of substantial US political and military involvement but which one interlocutor described as "six standard deviations from the normal." Nonetheless, illustrations from virtually every recent crisis worldwide emerged in conversations—not only Ukraine because of its current media coverage but also others, ranging from the Balkans to Mali and from Syria to Cambodia.

As one interviewee summarized, "not only is the moment propitious, but an ambitious initiative is long overdue." This report attempts to take the temperature of the field because recent crises have exacerbated long-standing and complicating problems as well as exposed new ones, all of which figure prominently in the next chapter.

4 https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/16/g20-bali-leaders-declaration/ and https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Declaration-on-Cultural-Heritage.pdf.

5 https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention.

6 https://en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and.

7 https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/.

8 For a discussion of significance, see Frederik Rosén, "Introduction: Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: Preserving Art While Protecting Life," in *The Preservation of Art and Culture in Times of War*, eds. Claire Oakes Finkelstein, Frederik Rosén, and Derek Gillman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 12–15; and Thomas G. Weiss and Nina Connelly, *Cultural Cleansing and Mass Atrocities: Protecting Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflict Zones* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty, 2017), Occasional Papers in Cultural Heritage Policy No. 1, 9–11.

9 UN Security Council, Resolution 2347, S/RES/2347, 3 (24 March 2017).

10 Kofi A. Annan, "What Is the International Community? Problems without Passports," *Foreign Policy*, no. 132 (Sept.–Oct. 2002): 30–31.

11 Quoted in Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, 2nd ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 15.

12 https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iicihr-ukraine/index.

13 https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-ukraine-icc-judges-issue-arrest-warrants-against-vladimir-vladimirovich-putin-and.

14 https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-qc-situation-ukraine-receipt-referrals-39-states.

15 Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the Struggle for the Genocide Convention* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and William Korey, *An Epitaph for Raphael Lemkin* (New York: Blaustein Institute, 2001). See also Edward C. Luck, *Cultural Genocide and the Protection of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Trust, 2018), Occasional Papers in Cultural Heritage Policy No. 2, 23–27.

16 "Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine Verified by UNESCO," https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco. UNESCO's list uses "cross-checking credible sources" of the most significant sites. In contrast, the Conflict Observatory lists potential damage to 1,689 out of 28,618 cultural heritage sites as of 1 December 2023, https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/apps/sites/#/home.

17 She first used the term in December 2014. See UNESCO, *UNESCO's Response to Protect Culture in Crises* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016): https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244984.

18 For recent academic treatments, see two comprehensive collections of essays: James Cuno and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2022); and Finkelstein, Gilman, and Rosén, eds., *The Preservation of Heritage in Times of War*.

19 Frederik Rosén, *NATO and Cultural Property: A Hybrid Threat Perspective* (Copenhagen: Nordic Center for Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict, 2022), 5. See also, Frederik Rosén, "NATO and Cultural Property: A Hybrid Threat Perspective," *Prism* 10, no. 3 (2023): 45–58.

20 European External Action Service, *2023 Report on the progress in the implementation of the "Concept on Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises: A component for peace and security in European Union's external action" and the dedicated Council Conclusions* (Brussels: European Union, 2023), document EEAS (2023), 3, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/cultural-heritage-conflicts-and-crises-2023-report_en.

21 ICISS, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001); and Thomas G. Weiss and Don Hubert, eds., *The Responsibility to Protect: Research, Bibliography, Background* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001). For interpretations by commissioners, see Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); and Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For commentaries, see Alex J. Bellamy, *Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to End Mass Atrocities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Anne Orford, *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Aidan Hehir, *The Responsibility to Protect: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

Interviews for this report reflected a shift away from a focus on cultural heritage for its own sake and toward its protection as an integral component of humanitarian and military tactics and strategies. The awareness of the importance of heritage is visible among the military—through the observance of international humanitarian law, courses in military academies and war colleges, discussions about NATO guidelines, and training seminars by organizations like the Blue Shield and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative. Pictured here, US military cultural heritage experts partner on a site assessment (left) and work on a test pit survey (right) in Honduras. Photos by US Army, Maria Pinel.

Iraqi heritage specialists practice salvage and recovery techniques in a mock disaster exercise at the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities in Erbil, Iraq. Founded in 2009, coursework at the Institute shifted focus to disaster preparedness and recovery in 2015 in response to ISIS's continued campaign of heritage destruction. Left: Photo by Jessica S. Johnson, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution; Right: Photo by Brian Michael Lione, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution.

2

Challenges In-country and Outside for Tangible Heritage and Local Professionals

There is an imperative to prevent destruction of cultural heritage; but when prevention fails, it is desirable to react and come to the rescue; when both of those fail, as is too often the case, it is then crucial to weigh the fraught possibilities of rebuilding. Prevention, everyone readily agrees, is the most essential task and top priority; yet it is relatively easy to promote but extremely difficult to implement. How can one justify the unknown and unverifiable benefits of forestalling something that has not happened? The existence of this applied research project was proof, as if any were needed, of the widespread failure in earlier attempts to stress the priority supposedly devoted to prevention and local capacity building.

This discussion reflects the views about the perceived advantages and disadvantages, or strengths and weaknesses, of various types of organizations, be they governmental, intergovernmental, or nongovernmental; private or public; big or small. The Smithsonian Institution is a curious hybrid—a quasi-ministry of culture in many minds, but one with substantial private funding and autonomy. The biases, experiences, and realities that necessarily enter subjective appreciations reflect the size, orientation, and ideology of individuals within implementing agencies; they also have an impact on the characterization of the pluses and minuses and overall influence of specific procedures, delays, requirements, and guidelines. Again, however, most aspects of the analysis undoubtedly are relevant for numerous implementing agencies, whatever their dimensions, missions, or locations.

Emerging from the interviews are nine distinct but related challenges, which are reported here while the next chapter groups solutions and suggestions to ameliorate them. The problems and possible solutions undoubtedly can be applied to many cases and institutions across geographical areas. The discussions in both chapters follow the flow of many interviews and conversations. The four most numerous preoccupations head the list, which does not reflect a rank-ordering of priorities, feasibility, or potential return on investments.

Funding and Incentives

"It's all about the money" was an opening remark from many interviewees. And we would continue with the notions of incentives and disincentives.

International projects, particularly those referred to euphemistically as being in "post-conflict" environments, are complicated and costly. Individuals and institutions with the financial means can dictate the intent, structure, and often outcomes of cultural heritage projects. Interviewees noted that the motivation of funders is sometimes opaque. For governments, heritage diplomacy has become a keystone of soft power projection—for instance, paving the way for efforts to foster US-style democracy. Funders also can be fickle, regularly altering priorities for countries or regions, or for the most desirable activities and their sequencing. Such behavior is reinforced by a lack of competition; there simply are not that many sources of finance for international heritage work. Globally, cultural heritage protection and preservation is underfunded, not only in comparison with overall needs but also in comparison to military assistance or countering the drug trade; in the United States, it also reflects the lower perceived relative value of cultural heritage in relationship to other sectors.

In addition, the US Government's political, military, and geostrategic aims in such places as Afghanistan and Iraq do not always coincide with the needs for heritage protection. The missions of numerous heritage

organizations also are not necessarily aligned with the articulated goals of the State Department and thus do not permit using available US funding. Many NGOs and UN organizations may be acting "illegally" merely by talking to some non-state actors to understand the nature of a violent conflict or to facilitate the negotiation of cross-border relief operations.

More than a few interviewees noted that the number of heritage preservation problems was so large that the emphasis on competition in the circulated questionnaire and in oral questioning was misplaced. In their view, counterproductive bureaucratic rivalries and the scramble for funds were not the major problems. While the number of funders and executing agencies had grown, the resources and capacities fall far short of demand. As one funder commented, "there are not a lot of people in this space," and another, "we're very thin on the ground." In contrast, other interlocutors judged our pointed queries about funding as on target: "There is just so much attention for resources and funding."

That said, the paucity of funders for international heritage work of any sort means that organizations hoping to receive resources must compete for their favor. Predictably, this reinforces the funders' ability to dominate agenda setting and allocations. In addition, potential implementers have a shallow bench. Working in foreign contexts is difficult in many instances but extraordinarily so amidst or following violent conflict. Insecurity further complicates the usual constraints on non-national implementers who struggle to navigate cultural differences; language barriers; multiple sets of laws; contracting and subcontracting procedures; and banking, visa, and customs restrictions.

The perceived challenges for independent funders are distinct from those of governments or implementing agencies seeking financial support for heritage protection. Governing authorities and board members reiterate the goal of long-term sustainability despite its numerous definitions and seemingly virtual irrelevance for project implementation during or after armed conflicts. Responding to crises and the resulting needs arising from violent conflict require large emergency stopgaps and all-hands-on-deck approaches that necessarily accord secondary priority to such longer-term issues as capacity building and local financial sustainability. Adding to this myopia, according to interviewees, funds for overhead (including those for coordinating personnel and training of staff) are often and inexplicably discouraged by donors. Yet, they are essential project and programmatic expenditures. Among the prominent and attainable objectives—noted by funders and recipients alike—is ensuring that donors received appropriate acknowledgement for their inputs.

Truth-in-packaging often represents a reporting casualty for grantees. The necessity to flex an organization's mission, priorities, or results was a frequent requirement to qualify for many earmarked resources. For example, foundation mission statements and policy priorities for any given administration, and therefore the monetary focus for the entity, may result in creative accounting in categorizing expenditures to circumnavigate what are viewed as unreasonable strictures and structures in addition to inflexible reporting requirements. Interviewees also painted a picture of grim implementation realities on the ground, which frequently were a far cry from the rosier success stories that their organizations were obliged routinely to tout in encounters with funders and in public relations.

Communications and Information

Running a close second on everyone's list of acute and widespread problems was the dire absence of consistent, timely, and accurate information (or "intelligence" in highly insecure settings) as well as poor or nonexistent communications among actors working to respond to endangered heritage. That is not to say that new efforts and initiatives were absent, simply that they did not appear to have adequately addressed this universally agreed shortcoming. Do agencies sufficiently know one another's areas of work? Do they know which funders to approach? Largely negative responses to such queries indicated the perennial nature of this long-standing challenge.

The existence of "silos" for information is perhaps more pronounced in this arena than elsewhere because of the extent to which the cultural heritage community relies on its own restricted stable of experts, researchers, evaluators, and commentators. There have at best been irregular communications with what increasingly are collaborators from the security and humanitarian sectors. The reticence or lack of enthusiasm for expanding heritage protection mandates from UN headquarters staff and troop contributors in Mali and by some representatives of NATO troops in Kosovo illustrated the need for better communications and more familiarity with the heritage community's goals and operations. One skeptic asked rhetorically "Would public opinion in troop-contributing countries sustain casualties to protect heritage?" At least part of the problem for this commentator was not poor communication but instead a concern about a likely lack of political will to sustain high costs if heritage protection activities, however well packaged and communicated, involved significant human as well as financial costs.

Even large operational agencies noted their lack of basic information about the availability of certain kinds of assistance or expertise—a familiar refrain was "I don't have a clue whom to contact in [fill in the organization]." One interviewee remained puzzled about who did what even after several years of funding cultural heritage work: "It would be extremely useful to have a Venn diagram." Another frustrated donor lamented that "a basic telephone tree" would help because "if we need to put it together, the response will be too late." Moreover, specialization among implementers is a significant challenge because donor priorities often determine the nature of proposals. The outbreak of violence in unfamiliar settings and regions also represented a specific problem for the heritage community—few implementing agencies, for instance, were on the ground in Ukraine before 2022 and in Mali before 2012.

Opinions regarding the value of the Blue Shield's activities and emphases varied. An international organization with national committees founded to protect cultural heritage, the name derives from the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Event of Armed Conflict. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) serves as a model because of its internationally recognized symbols and national committees. While that Geneva-based federation may provide an aspiration, it does not provide a meaningful comparison because it has a century-and-a-half head start on the Blue Shield in terms of budgets, capacities, visibility, and reputation. So, the latter's symbol to indicate an unacceptable target because of its exceptional cultural value is insufficiently known, and its national committees are fledgling, many just in formation. Indeed, the Blue Shield as a monolithic entity is in its infancy; after decades of turf issues, the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) only formally merged with the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS) in 2016 to become the Blue Shield. Some interlocutors saw a significant growth potential for education and training, but any comparison between the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the ICBS and ANCBS is misleading. The reality is a poorly funded volunteer operation whose goals are laudable but whose potential outstrips its capacities.

Established in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the blue shield is an emblem for cultural property that should be protected, and for identification of those working to protect it. The symbol was taken up by Blue Shield International, an organization founded to protect cultural heritage. Photo by US Army, Scott T. Sturkol, Public Affairs Office, Fort McCoy, Wis.

Time Frames

A third problem that cuts across others is the inflexibility of most budget allocations and financial reporting years. Governments, philanthropies, and international organizations have varying calendars and degrees of flexibility about artificial and often-underestimated completion dates and deadlines. Accurate estimates are difficult in the best of circumstances but especially challenging in violent crises. In addition, reporting requirements vary substantially; they can be onerous and take on lives of their own. Many interlocutors pointed to the resulting rigidities that often confront the necessities for quick and nimble reactions and continual, ad hoc adaptations. Yet, artificial deadlines and onerous reporting requirements are a fact of programming life. One official quipped that juggling multiple projects and deadlines, including trying to "rob Peter to pay Paul," was wasteful but not impossible, resembling the difficulties of "programming quality time with your children, which occasionally coincides with reality."

When a crisis erupts, it is too late to ensure that adequate planning (including for the evacuation of staff) and other paperwork be in order. Once an emergency erupts, it is

almost impossible to scramble and secure a formal sign-off on necessary agreements, to formulate standard operating procedures (SOPs), to master proposal formats, and the list goes on. Even seasoned US civil servants complained that it was not always obvious how to unlock funds from DoD and USAID even with insider knowledge and familiarity. Having sufficiently trained local personnel with disaster planning experience who are well-versed with procedures before crises is a well-recognized objective, which interviewees noted was more easily prescribed than implemented.

Another lament, resembling a long-standing one for economic and social development programming and technical assistance, is the misplaced emphasis on immediate and concrete benefits that are supposed to be quickly self-sustaining. Such results are arduous to realize under most circumstances but virtually unimaginable amidst the insecurity and associated problems in zones of violent conflict. Short-term time horizons are driven by funders—usually with the commitment and disbursement requirements of an annual budget in mind. It also confronts what are no longer oxymorons but are officially called "permanent emergencies" (e.g., Myanmar and Sudan) and predictable, if unspecific, waves of crises. Donor "fatigue" is perhaps overused and an exaggeration—after all, funds for development, humanitarian aid, and heritage protection continue to increase—but it nonetheless is a voiced concern among implementing agencies.

In addition to being inadequate, available resources need to be allocated "wisely" by funders, which in a post-conflict context often translates into short-term, high-profile, and high-gain projects—for example, reconstructing a destroyed building, or "saving" art or monuments. The shortest path to demonstrating successful heritage assistance in a post-conflict area follows a formula: damaged heritage + international funding = repaired heritage. This simple equation provides easy-to-understand metrics supported by striking images to share with donors and decision makers. The need to demonstrate "tangible and persuasive outcomes" was not dissimilar in for-profit corporate foundations and non-profit philanthropies. In brief, results need to be swift to realize and marketable, usually with a one-to-two-year timeline. Despite the widespread commitment to relying on local knowledge and partners, the constraints resulting from sellable projects do not allow for significant capacity

building or the demonstration of the longer-term results that would make a team or site self-sustaining.

Those outside of Washington, DC, envied some of the Smithsonian's "flexible" budgeting procedures. Administrators can repurpose residual or unspent federal funds from one year to the next—that is, they only "expire" after the following year. Through fundraising and endowments, the Smithsonian also has flexible trust funds that can be leveraged to help keep the doors open at its museums and similarly keep projects afloat from year to year. In addition to the virtual absence of the longer-term commitments of funds, other interlocutors rued the inflexibility of most grants and longed for more medium-term and flexible program support instead of the dominant short-term and rigid funding for specific projects.

Proliferation and Lack of Coordination

A possible downside of the current prominence and perceived growing salience of cultural heritage protection—for the cultural, humanitarian, and security communities alike—is the ill-considered establishment of new organizations, new units within existing entities, and a significant and poorly planned expansion of fieldwork by some long-standing pioneers. The absence of effective coordination and the increasing number of autonomous moving parts is a perennial lament about virtually all international responses (and national ones as well).

There are, according to at least some commentators, "too many players." As a relative newcomer to the field, one funder recalled a reaction early in a new job: "I was shocked at the sheer number of organizations in the field." If there was inadequate interest in the past, it may be now that there are too many actors, each independently scrambling for attention and resources with inadequate numbers of local staff. Examples of "scaling up" were not mentioned during interviews, whereas the proliferation of institutions was.

"Herding cats" is a characteristic epithet hurled in many operational arenas where the absence of coordination is viewed as *the* problem. This truism regularly surfaces within the UN system and the US government and among NGOs. Thus, the absence of coordination is unsurprising in an operational terrain populated by public and private as well as governmental, nongovernmental, and intergovernmental organizations working

in the heritage arena, some at cross purposes or with different agendas. Almost all interviewees bemoaned this reality, but many resisted such notions as centralization, consolidation, and hierarchy; the emphasis instead is on the silver lining, the positive results from autonomy. One interviewee was somewhat perplexed with our question because "You're actually assuming they want to cooperate." Another interviewee from a funding agency called for a "doubling down on coordination," growing from the observation that "everyone is trying to figure it out."

Intriguingly, funders seemed to have understood better than executing agencies the need for regular interactions to understand who was doing what, along with both gaps and overlaps in programming and resource mobilization. Project managers defended themselves by citing the obvious, namely that coordination is not inexpensive and occupies precious staff time. The costs, in terms of more and better personnel and support, including training, substantially add to the overhead costs that fiduciary boards and governing bodies customarily discourage. One representative of a major funding source for cultural heritage indicated an improved board understanding of the need for such overhead in budgets, which included approving a new policy with a blanket percentage (20 percent) of a total grant that could be approved specifically to foster the hiring and training of more staff. Some interlocutors asked, why are the costs of greater communication, networking, capacity building, and cooperation viewed by funders as wasteful instead of as reasonable investments in the protecting-heritage business?

Turf Consciousness

A separate challenge—albeit linked to the increasing number of actors and to the growing, if still inadequate, funding for cultural heritage protection—is the competition for scarce resources and resulting counterproductive turf-consciousness. An obvious consequence is the prerequisite for organizational branding within a programmatic area to authoritatively claim a perceived market niche and comparative advantage in the scramble for funds. Moreover, visibility in one crisis has an impact on image and thus fundraising efforts more broadly. One interviewee mentioned being obliged to jump into the fray in Ukraine where the organization had no previous experience "because fundraising for other activities

follows the news cycle." As such, it is difficult to acknowledge the relevance of other organizations better placed for whatever reason (language, regional experience, relationships, track record) to intervene in a specific crisis. One interviewee dubbed it a "predictable pathology" that impedes communication and collaboration.

Discussions about the value of dual-purpose organizations (for example, the Smithsonian and UNESCO) revolved around their role and image in the marketplace by providing two distinct sets of outputs: ideas/norms/research/standard-setting, on the one hand, versus concrete assistance and services in field operations, on the other hand. There was no consensus about what mixture is best, or even whether single-purpose organizations (for example, Human Rights Watch and the World Monuments Fund) with narrow specializations were preferable.

It is easier to generate favorable media treatment and raise funds for operational services, but the feedback loops from concrete operations to applied research and advocacy (and vice versa) are, according to many, crucial to heighten effectiveness in the policy arena. Advocacy is more credible when it reflects concrete testing of recommendations with people and projects on the ground, and "transferring knowledge from labs" constitutes an essential component of capacity building.

In addition, networks built up over time in a variety of contexts, including basic as well as applied research and publications along with conferences and seminars, can be helpful to rapid operational reactions. While sometimes viewed as luxuries, participants from earlier training sessions or seminars or annual meetings, for example, were essential inside Ukraine in 2022 at the outset of the war. Previously, few outside agencies had been on the ground in that country, and so those with links to an alumni network were immediately helpful. Similar examples of the crucial importance of long-standing professional contacts were often cited as critical inputs during emergencies. The ability to call upon local networks is no less relevant in countries that have long received inputs from outside implementing agencies.

Capacity Building and Long-term Sustainable Partnerships

Essential for effective prevention, but also for response and recovery, is the existence of dedicated and well-

At the Mosul Cultural Museum in Iraq, Director Zaid Ghazi Saadallah (left) and the Smithsonian's Brian Michael Lione (right) survey a destroyed mihrab display in the Islamic Hall during assessments of the museum and immediate stabilization efforts in 2019. Photo by Sebastian Meyer for the Smithsonian Institution.

A joint Iraqi-Smithsonian team works to document the damage in the Mosul Cultural Museum's Assyrian Hall in 2019. The team examines the damaged remains of ancient sculpted guardian figures known as lamassu. In February 2015, ISIS posted videos of themselves toppling statues, destroying ancient carved reliefs, and severely damaging the Mosul Museum building. Photo by Sebastian Meyer for the Smithsonian Institution.

Mosul Cultural Museum Director Saadallah and the museum's Head of Conservation, Saad Ahmed (left), examine the cenotaph of Imam Yahya b. Al Qasim (carved in 1239) as part of a joint Iraqi-Smithsonian survey of damage after ISIS occupation. Photo by Sebastian Meyer for the Smithsonian Institution.

In May 2023, the Mosul Cultural Museum held a press conference announcing the next phase in reopening the museum. Started in 2018 as an inaugural ALIPH Foundation project, the rehabilitation is a collaboration among the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and its State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Musée du Louvre, the Smithsonian Institution, and the World Monuments Fund. Shown here is museum director Saadallah explaining an exhibition highlighting the history, destruction, and recovery of the building. The museum is expected to reopen in 2026. Photo by Richard R. Kurin, Smithsonian Institution.

trained local personnel; in the words of one interviewee, "preparedness is *the* task." The necessity to improve the skills of and available technologies for local staff as well as expanding their number are clearly priorities for virtually every implementing agency working in this or any arena. The requirement for local partners is a *sine qua non*, at least in theory, for a growing number of funders. The articulation of such a laudable objective in mission statements and project documents, however, rarely meets with adequate executive attention or resources because other goals are perceived as more urgent or fundable, or both. "Instead of waiting and waiting and waiting until heritage is lost," one interlocutor noted, it is essential to make capacity building "our top priority because we can't just keep responding."

When an emergency erupts, both funders and implementers justifiably feel compelled to react rapidly. However, their attention span often is limited; they pay attention for as long as heritage needs are in the public eye, which generally means dramatic media coverage, and at the top of funders' priority lists. No news is not good news for those hoping to pursue critical longer-term objectives, particularly capacity building. Dramatic photo-ops and favorable publicity about a visible and immediate impact on an iconic heritage site in a community make far more attractive public relations pitches than less tangible investments in the future. One interviewee noted, "no one wants to see continually pictures of people working in a classroom."

The rapid reaction necessary for implementers seeking and obtaining funds typically allows inadequate time for them to fully understand local needs. Those being supported in the host country therefore do not necessarily have a high-decibel voice in project planning, much less in ensuring their priorities as outcomes. Successful dialogue about local needs is built on trust, and trust-building requires not only time but also national staff familiar with the paperwork and distinct cultures of implementing agencies. Absent a comprehensive needs assessment, the formulaic result is an outcome on which locals and implementers can agree; this accord is nominally documented in requests for funding, and projects are approved based on this purported local buy-in and approval.

The project starts, the project ends. After the ribbon has been cut, the VIPs have gone home, and the donors have been notified of the effectiveness of their support, the implementing partner closes shop and departs. What then? What if there is not a trained cadre of heritage specialists to maintain saved heritage, to properly manage it in perpetuity, and to preserve it should another crisis occur? Or what if there are newly minted specialists as shining examples of how training improved their work and the capacity of national institutions, but none is likely to receive continued government financing once outside agencies and subsidies disappear? What if the owners of the preserved heritage have no way—or worse, no intention—to be good stewards? "Limited absorptive capacity" for outside heritage assistance has many explanations.

When posing these questions to interlocutors, the responses conveyed reluctant resignation in the face of the enormous and long-range tasks, accompanied by poor or mixed results from numerous projects. It is unsurprising that several characterized the crucial local personnel component of "sustainability" as more a slogan for sidebars in annual reports than a likely project and program output. This so-called priority is all too often readily set aside because of the difficulty of the task itself and of demonstrating tangible results in the immediate or even middle term.

Local, post-conflict heritage caretakers are typically government agencies; few countries suffering violence have a functioning private heritage sector. In addition, interviewees pointed out that a post-conflict government may take some time to stabilize—years, or more likely decades as Afghanistan and Iraq so amply demonstrate. In that time, heritage is an unlikely focus for investment and promotion. During the stabilization phase, heritage project implementers can find it difficult to build local relationships. Stabilizing countries have inadequate personnel and shift them frequently or leave posts unfilled. Heritage-related laws and procedures either do not exist or are ignored. In operational arenas, the national attitudes toward bilateral and multilateral organizations can quickly sour. The easiest way to proceed is to build informal networks that finesse recommended procedures; while such shortcuts may be effective in the short term, they are an unsustainable solution without hope of replication. Again, interlocutors cited numerous country cases, but especially Afghanistan and Iraq, to demonstrate the shortcomings with taking shortcuts.

Even in a stabilized, reconstructed country, a post-conflict government usually requires a wide support network to maintain heritage to anything resembling international standards. Interlocutors noted that success entails a variety of inputs: legal protections; higher education involvement to establish and grow the heritage profession; private entities and NGOs with representation from academic, research, practitioner, and advocacy stakeholders; and infrastructure (museums, labs, and the like) where trained heritage workers can practice. All of this assumes adequate financial resources and a commitment to preserve, conserve, and manage heritage to an international standard adapted to a specific local context. The length of this list and the demonstrated shortcomings with most capacity building suggest why so few success stories emerged from interviews.

Staff Turnover

Burnout among international field personnel is as acute among those working in the cultural heritage arena as in other emergency fields where intense, insecure, round-the-clock pressure and action are essential to alleviating suffering and saving lives. The resulting fatigue and turnover constitute serious shortcomings for the institutional memory and planning capabilities required for future interventions. Moreover, changes in government add an additional element of programmatic uncertainty and inconsistency, which is clearly in evidence in the United States where new administrations routinely necessitate changes in senior appointments and priorities. This reality has a direct equivalent among local counterparts, who suffer still additional financial, familial, and security pressures.

Political appointees and civil servants alike agreed that turnover can bring new and beneficial energy, ideas, and approaches. Yet, it also is problematic for continuity and lessons-learning; commentators rued that senior appointments with a new US administration are generally in post for only 1–3 years versus the longer-run service and perspectives of civil servants, typically in posts for 5–10 years. The turnover problem can be especially acute within political missions in war zones, where many embassy and consulate posts are single-year, unaccompanied tours. So, the very people charged to oversee recovery projects and ensure outcomes might change several times before any given effort can be completed. This further muddies the intent and communications of the highest-level appointees. In a country like Iraq, for instance, where government-to-government commu-nications are critical, embassy and consulate turnover can exacerbate misunderstandings—this contrasts with NGO or UN personnel, who tend to be in posts longer and can talk directly to government officials.

In addition, roles in the US Department of Defense rotate often, with the predictable negative impact on future programs resulting from inadequate institutional memory. One interviewee summarized, "it often feels like one step forward and two steps back." In addition, several interlocutors pointed to the unpredictable vagaries of funds appearing and disappearing during Congressional budgeting processes that were exacerbated by staff turnover and changes in priorities for administrations. "Muddling along" was the result: constant, ad hoc adaptations and juggling, which unsurprisingly worked to the detriment of more effective programming.

Poor Integration in Humanitarian Action

The shift away from a focus on cultural heritage for its own sake and toward its protection as an integral component of humanitarian and military tactics and strategies requires a comprehensive reframing of projects, programs, policies, and priorities. That shift, according to interviewees, is nascent at best and absent or resisted at worst. Members of the heritage, humanitarian, and security communities—as well as political leadership—admit to a lack of familiarity with the cultures and SOPs of potential collaborators from the other sectors. The military and humanitarians do not necessarily understand one another, but there is at least some overlap in the relief and protection approaches of both, which have been reinforced in the many crises of the post–Cold War period.

There appears far less and discernible overlap with the heritage community. Responders openly admitted to an inadequate knowledge and appreciation of the concerns and cultures of humanitarians and the military.

While advocating for cultural heritage's inclusion in humanitarian responses, multiple interviewees recounted being told "we don't have the time or people to do this" if they get a response at all. In the United States, USAID is meant to be one of the agencies regularly attending US Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee (CHCC) meetings, but they have not done so consistently and overall have not engaged with heritage protection as a priority concern. This is especially crucial because USAID is in the lead for international emergency responses, as

FEMA is domestically. A shift has been happening slowly with staff at FEMA and state emergency management agencies explaining that they are trying to push "protection of cultural heritage into guidance and doctrine, but this is a far cry from implementation."

The awareness of the crucial importance of heritage is visible among the military—through the observance of international humanitarian law, courses in military academies and war colleges, discussions about NATO guidelines,[22] and training seminars by organizations like the Blue Shield as well as SCRI. Such awareness is less in evidence among humanitarians who rush to protect and assist vulnerable populations battered by human-made or natural disasters. Indeed, mobilizing international measures to protect heritage confronts greater resistance than pleas to come to the rescue of vulnerable populations. The danger of appearing to prioritize objects and sites over the welfare of populations is palpable—for example, several interlocutors indicated the Taliban's immediate propaganda value resulting from the uproar over the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas while Afghans suffered. Several humanitarians posed something like the following rhetorical question: is it not possible to emphasize the importance of a society's cultural heritage while addressing the fate of vulnerable populations?

Architectural critic Robert Bevan offers a reply: "Incorporating cultural destruction in the definition of genocide is essential to making this happen."[23] The argument that the protection of cultural heritage is inseparable from the protection of people has, according to some interviewees, helped elevate the relevance of "bricks" along with "blood." Nonetheless, they also noted that empirical evidence about the payoffs from the linkage remains more anecdotal than scientific.[24] Others argued that no hierarchy of protection is necessary because the choice between the two is false, just as a choice between people and the natural environment is false. Air, water, and culture are essential for life.

This argument was reinforced with the September 2016 ICC decision and a guilty verdict for Ahmad al-Mahdi, a member of an armed extremist group from northern Mali, for committing a war crime in the deliberate 2012 attack on the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Timbuktu. Interviewees commented on the seeming ambiguity and confusion in US government circles about the ICC—Washington was one of only seven countries to vote against the Rome Statute in 1998, but the Clinton administration signed it in 2000 before the Bush administration "unsigned" it in 2002. At the same time, Mali's ratification of the Rome Statute had permitted the extradition, trial, and conviction of al-Mahdi.

Evaluation and Evidence

Also obvious to our interviewees was the necessity for better applied research and harder-hitting evaluations. Moving quickly to the next crisis has long been a laudable characteristic of organizations and their dedicated staffs working to protect both vulnerable populations as well as their heritage. However, interlocutors across the spectrum indicated that serious and more in-depth evaluations of recent experiences are required to foster "learning" instead of "spurning" lessons in the rush to the next emergency. "The emphasis has been on firefighting and not reflecting on recent experience," summarized one official.

"Proof is anecdotal," complained one funder who suggested pursuing metrics like those that have emerged in development economics as to what pays off in which period and why. In addition to the lack of settled social science metrics and indeed of solid available data, many interviewees—and not just academics and policy analysts—indicated the underexploited potential of universities, which have a pool of in-house expertise that can be quickly mobilized but too rarely is. The syncretic nature of all cultural heritage has been emphasized insufficiently in a period of increasing polarization and bitterness—a reality that could be assuaged by scholars. Among the questions that surfaced are the following: Why are there not more active partnerships between academics and members of the heritage community? Why not take advantage of the university's outsider status to act as a "midwife" for change in cultural institutions set in their ways and delivery of services?

Robust, honest, and objective post-project evaluations suffer from the previously mentioned need to put the best institutional foot forward in grant reporting; therefore, many public evaluations are both less numerous and hard-hitting than they should be. As a result, the reluctance to run risks or undertake experiments loomed large. How to "package" inevitable failures was a constraint because of the necessity to shield future appeals from the predictable backlash and embarrassing publicity accompanying any failed experiment. Rather than attempting to hide failures and avoid risks entirely, one observer emphasized greater honesty in efforts to learn lessons: "let's make lemonade from the lemons." The requirement for attempting, at least on occasion, new strategies and tactics should outweigh replicating safe and known but ultimately inadequate previous models.

Across institutions, interlocutors characterized funders and administrators as too "risk averse." Some of the reticence is driven by the genuine fear of lawsuits—"those with deep pockets make the best targets." At the same time, reluctance to run risks can reflect legitimate concerns about the security of staff and possible bad media coverage that could lead to embarrassment and result in financial cuts.

Numerous interlocutors praised a relatively recent development that improves access to local sources, namely, "boutique" programs aimed at helping scholars or cultural workers deemed at risk. The definition of "at risk" is fluid as countries not facing violent conflict could be threatened by climate change, natural disasters, or political instability among other factors. The problems for scholars and practitioners fleeing violence or with unacceptable political views are different, and they require better definition to enhance scholar/practitioner programs. Is the goal of such ongoing programs at Harvard and Yale temporary or permanent protection? Assuming risks abate, will these participants want to return home? If they do, are their countries' academic and practitioner communities able to welcome them back and utilize their skills?

One administrator recommended "observership" as a better label than "internship" or "fellowship" because such professionals are often very senior and have substantial skills and knowledge to contribute to better research in addition to the educational experience for students, faculties, and museum personnel. Nonetheless, such benefits have typically been downplayed because they pale in comparison with the obvious political and fundraising attractiveness of supporting the imperiled individuals themselves. Mundane logistical problems loomed large—typically no evacuation plans are in place for key staff, and visas are almost always challenging. Also problematic were the challenges of finding meaningful assignments for the scholars or cultural workers at risk who are fleeing such dire situations as Afghanistan, Yemen, Iran, and Myanmar.

Donor preferences often are reflected in university decisions about the character and location of projects and programs. Distinctions between faculty-based and free-standing programs financed with soft, outside resources were meaningful for central university personnel but not for others. As one university interlocutor opined, "students don't pay attention to disciplinary boundaries while university administrations do."

Discussions of visas were unexpected. Securing a J-1 is cheap and quick, but its terms are less favorable to the beneficiary than the more expensive and elusive H1-B. Recipients of an initial H1-B can stay for three years, extendable to six. However, J-1 visas are shorter and based on the idea of temporary refuge. Heritage workers and scholars at risk with them have a five-year limit, and they are obliged to return and face likely unfavorable realities.

22 Beatrice Romiti and Antonello Folliero, eds., *The Safety and Security of Cultural Heritage in Zones of War or Instability* (Washington, DC: IOS Press, 2021), NATO Science for Peace and Security Series - E: Human and Societal Dynamics / NHSDP 153.

23 Robert Bevan, *Monumental Lies: Culture Wars and the Truth about the Past* (London: Verso, 2022), 332.

24 For the perspective of a pediatrician, see Paul H. Wise, "Saving Stones and Saving Lives: A Humanitarian Perspective on Protecting Cultural Heritage in War," in Cuno and Weiss, *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*, 309–22.
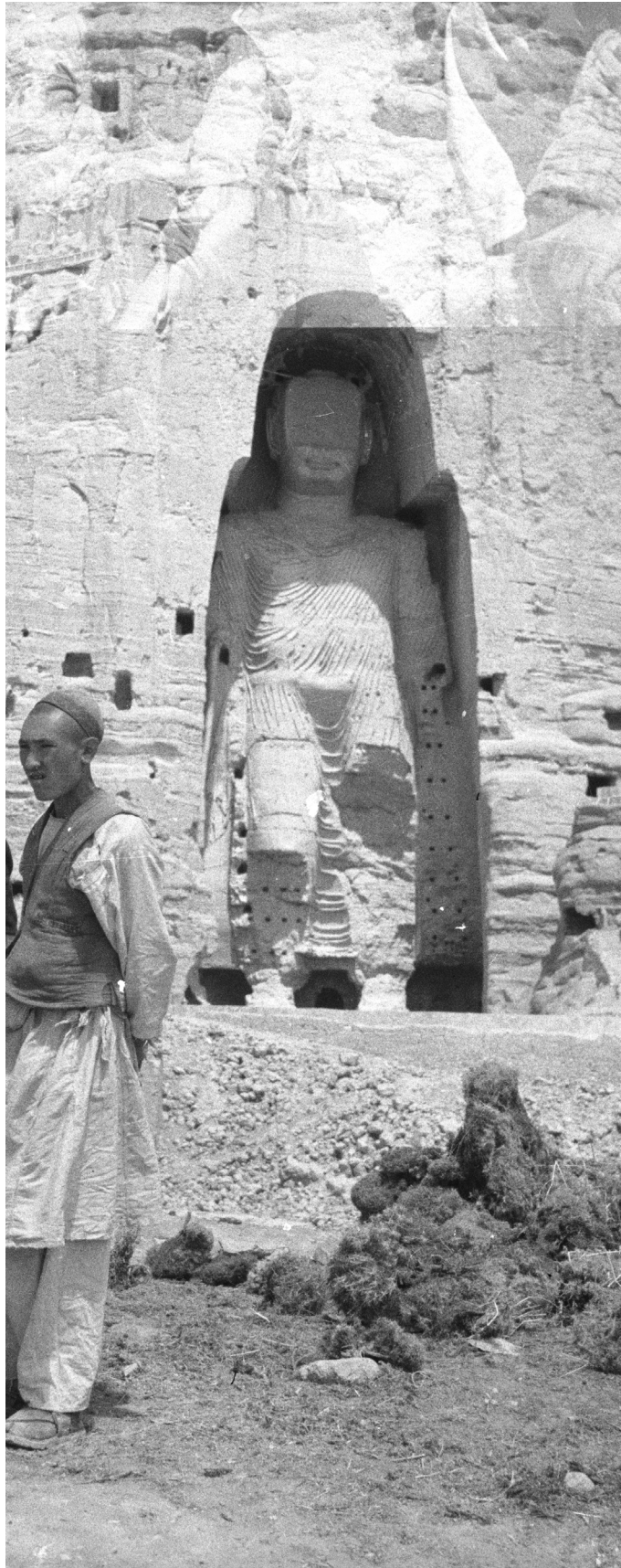
Left: The sixth-century Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan before their destruction by the Taliban in 2001 (ca. 1939–40). Photo by Annemarie Schwarzenbach / Schweizerische Nationalbibliothek (NB), SLA-Schwarzenbach-A-5-20/174. Right: The Buddhas of Bamiyan in September 2021. Many interviewees for this report noted that the 2001 dynamiting of the Buddhas of Bamiyan was a catalyst in the cultural heritage field. Photo by Ali Azad / Pexels.

3

Light at the End of the Tunnel?

In addition to surveying the problems identified by major US actors working to protect cultural heritage amidst armed conflict and violence, this mapping exercise aims to identify insights gleaned from recent experience about which protection efforts worked as well as which failed, and, just as crucially, why. The logic driving the applied research was the intrinsic value of heritage: to preserve whole societies, including their histories, cultural identities, and ways of life. Cultural heritage is an irreplaceable record of human existence. Yet, museums and the cultural sector remain especially vulnerable in times of political and military turmoil.

The preceding chapter's enumeration of challenges was partial, as is this chapter's listing of possible successful experiments, precedents, and forward-looking recommendations; neither purports to be comprehensive, but rather both aim to start an essential conversation based on interviews. This chapter emphasizes recent developments that were cited as improvements that could be replicated—usually modestly described as "decent" but not necessarily "best" practice.

Suggestions are presented under the same nine headings as the problems in the preceding chapter; they undoubtedly are not as numerous or striking as the gaps and shortcomings identified. Those who work to protect cultural heritage have something in common with the scholars and policy analysts who investigate the subject: namely, there are usually more questions than answers, more valid criticisms than viable solutions.

Nonetheless, many interlocutors' judgments coincided with the considered view of one seasoned practitioner: "Lest we forget, successfully muddling through by being pragmatic and focusing on results has led to progress." Indeed, some interviewees who have worked in the field for decades argued that change might even be considered impressive. That is, responses have entailed impromptu actions, problemsolving, network forming, and fundraising; but all were guided by rational choices and approaches. For those who have worked to improve the delivery of overseas development assistance and humanitarian action, many problems in the previous chapter will resonate, as will some of the insights and suggestions here. Variations of many of them, in fact, have been suggested for years.

Funding and Incentives

While there is no straightforward or universal solution to overcoming shortfalls in funding, numerous suggestions emerged from the interviews. There are ways to restructure funds or funding mechanisms within current institutions that would at least make funds more readily available and might increase them. For example, USAID's Emergency Response Fund (ERF), facilitated through the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), could help stimulate more nimble responses that incorporate heritage into humanitarian priorities and frameworks. The OFDA is responsible for leading and coordinating the US Government's response to overseas natural and human-made disasters; it would benefit the cultural heritage community to be part of their funding designs and allocations from the outset. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to take another example, could incorporate heritage as a more central component in the humanitarian matrix for the ERF and Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). One knowledgeable UN insider when asked specifically about such a measure commented, "It certainly would not hinder and probably help."

Another alteration would be increased flexibility by donors in working to adapt to evolving needs in the field. For instance, the Kaplan Fund altered its guidelines to respond sooner rather than waiting for a conflict to end. Some funders, including the Mellon Foundation, are recognizing the importance of unrestricted operating funds as part of larger grants—essential to carrying out the behind-the-scenes work of any organization. After five years focused mainly on site-specific recovery and

reconstruction, ALIPH expanded its remit to include multiyear efforts to protect the cultural heritage threatened by climate change in countries in conflict or post-crisis situations, including support for capacity building and for decidedly less tangible approaches involving "traditional knowledge and know-how."

Another illustration is the flexibility, exercised since 2001, within decentralized country allocations of the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Although country eligibility is limited, its five-year funding envelope is helpful in facilitating adaptations and strengthening the role of diplomatic personnel with their local counterparts in eligible countries. A pertinent example of such funding is the digitization and documentation project by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute (now the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, West Asia and North Africa) for the National Museum of Afghanistan. Some country donors to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have agreed to a fixed and unquestioned percentage of total grants—a kind of "tax"—to cover supervision and coordination expenses as well as staff training in headquarters. This type of funding modality has a direct consequence for encouraging coordination.

In terms of corporate interest, one activist proposed "changing the narrative" as had taken place for climate change. While a decade ago it was mainly business foundations that financed projects aimed to address a warming planet, more recently the profit motives of the for-profit sector had led to significant investments rather than merely corporate philanthropy. A relatively unexplored potential source is increased investment by the travel and tourism industry for which cultural heritage is inherent in their business model.

A consequential development in cultural heritage funding was the 2017 establishment of ALIPH. Its creation reflected an increased international consciousness of the massive destruction of cultural heritage, especially in the Middle East, and the widespread necessity for increased funding to support preservation, especially in emergency contexts where specific needs are unpredictable and rapid reaction is essential. The mixture of governmental and private funds was an innovation in resource mobilization for specific but small projects through regular calls for proposals in individual country contexts; its rolling ERF also created a helpful, unallocated pool of resources to respond to urgent and unforeseen

destruction. But such major philanthropies as Ford, Zuckerberg, Gates, and Rockefeller remain on the sidelines in this arena.

With the announced return of the United States to UNESCO and its Executive Board after both political and financial absences (most recent withdrawal in 2017, finances stopped in 2011), a likely financial priority for future non-core contributions (after paying more than $600 million in back dues) will be protecting heritage. This issue remains highly visible and crucial for the international organization and the United States, which has, among other things, criticized UNESCO's performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, whose heritage was a preoccupation for the United States.

In terms of incentives, changes in internal administrative measures in large institutions could be helpful, including both the facilitation of release time for staff to be seconded temporarily to field operations and also the acceleration of career advancement and salary increases for those shouldering heightened risk in disaster and conflict settings. Critically reevaluating stringent security measures was also mentioned as a possibility to facilitate faster and improved reactions to crises. The absorptive capacity of local administrations is often quite limited, which could be alleviated by the provision of temporary administrative support from funders to facilitate the formulation of project proposals and the requisite periodic reports for grants. Another way to improve such capacity would be to pool funding for several small local implementing organizations to share a consolidated budget and report requirements. It would be useful to compile a list of best, or at least decent, practices that could be applied by project administrators without fear of second-guessing and repercussions.

Communications and Information

Closely linked to funding are shortcomings in communications and access to information. They are consistently identified as core areas for which feasible remedies exist. Moreover, it is not too obvious to specify that better preservation of cultural heritage could be facilitated with better information sharing about what activities are occurring and where, and what needs are unmet. The costs of ensuring information exchanges and in-person interactions with other organizations are substantial and should be viewed as necessary operational expenditures rather than "bureaucratic waste."

A comprehensive database should be compiled, perhaps starting with a survey of existing ones followed by a proposal for requirements to ensure that data gathered by various sources remain compatible and up-to-date. In fact, one essential task would be efforts to standardize software so that local counterparts track what is in place or has gone missing or is destroyed. One perplexed observer found six different systems in one country and asked, "Is there a method to this madness?" The answer to the rhetorical question was obvious with the multiple and largely incompatible platforms, a case of "software run amok." The magnitude of this challenge is "a very tall order" to coordinate across US agencies and organizations, let alone internationally—even the Smithsonian uses different collections management software across units.

Indeed, a global mapping of key institutions—what we unrealistically thought might start in this brief project—should be compiled, consolidated, and regularly updated. One veteran interlocutor mentioned the advantage of a personal "gigantic rolodex," which was updated continually for domestic contacts. Hence, something as obvious as a "Protection of Cultural Heritage Directory" with contact information could be a useful output. In an overstatement that highlights this need, one interviewee observed that "expertise does not matter, networks do." An updated donor database with a listing of active projects could also be an additional product. Part of a database could be a compilation of evaluations of past projects to be shared.

Crucial and up-to-date information is hard to maintain; standardized and regular information sharing should occur through dashboards, working groups, and consortiums. One illustration is the pioneering portal of the Culture in Crisis Program at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A),[25] which asks the sector to upload their own information. The central problem with such sites is the absence of designated responsibility for content. They are built on self-reporting, with no mandate or agreement by practitioners to upload their own information or to keep it current. Despite a "commitment to report," one interlocutor estimated that "one-quarter submit after-action reports." And even those filed are difficult or even impossible to use for basic or applied research because there are no consistent or standardized requirements for entries.

Moreover, some implementing agencies do not post any information because of this no-host, no-standards approach. The US CHCC also has experimented, with limited success, using various methods to track projects and activities for sixteen entities across the federal government.[26]

Many of these efforts have been unable to remain up-to-date for a variety of predictable reasons, particularly the numerous demands on limited staff who can gather and compile accurate and timely data. This shortcoming is especially acute because so many parties are crucial for inputting information at every level. Interlocutors argued that improvements would result from regular working group meetings or frequent verbal channels of communication among entities working on similar objectives. For example, the CHCC's Preservation Working Group, composed of some nine US Government entities, convenes regularly as well as for specific crises to share information. This practical experience is one reason that some interviewees commended this project's presumption that a multidisciplinary and multiparty network could help ameliorate, among other things, communications.

A similar type of ad hoc and occasional convening has also had an impact on funders. In the United States, a promising start was the informal gathering of private and public funders under the auspices of the Grant Makers in Cultural Heritage Preservation, which subsequently has expanded. There is no secretariat or fixed meeting schedule, but this informal group shares information and strives to identify and prioritize needs within their collective available resources. The convening and functioning of this group help members assess what efforts are being funded by which organizations, where, and with what resources. Unmet needs as well as duplicative efforts can be identified. Information on the V&A portal heightens funders' knowledge and grantees' awareness. Interviewees' favorable evaluation centered on accessing capabilities and resources within the network. For example, some funders in the network can react more quickly than others and adapt, including the Cultural Emergency Response (CER) and ALIPH.

Rather than exploring new avenues for compiling specialized information, interlocutors suggested "not reinventing various wheels" and pursuing greater familiarity with and possible expansion of existing policy and information-sharing instruments. Specific reference was made to the UN's OCHA and the Organization for

Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC).

There are helpful consciousness-raising efforts that could be furthered through enhanced public education and relations. For example, *National Geographic Magazine* has benefited from Walt Disney Company's ownership in airing coverage of crises and damage to cultural heritage. More education materials and films could communicate more broadly and help mobilize public and political support, such as the success and recognition of *The Monuments Men* movie of 2014. According to one interviewee, such efforts were particularly important given the polarized politics in the United States, where cultural heritage protection "was not on anyone's radar" and for which there was "no bandwidth."

For its part, the cultural heritage field could expand dramatically efforts to digitize collections and maintain inventories, which are essential for effective preservation as well as for information sharing. While numerous digitization undertakings are underway, the lack of standardization and SOPs for data sharing prevents these efforts from being more effective and having more impact. Responding to this need builds on, but is more ambitious than, the Art Loss Register's Cultural Heritage at Risk Database (CHARD), which over the last three decades has aimed to register proactively cultural objects to ensure that if they are stolen or looted such items can be identified if they appear on the market.[27] Several interviewees pointed to this arena as one of the most potentially substantive, proactive efforts that could provide a baseline for restoration and rebuilding. One interviewee chanted, "preservation through documentation ought to be the mantra." Another obvious requirement is for multiple digital copies, one of which would be stored in a secure off-site space. The Arcadia Fund was interested but ultimately did not launch such a project with the J. Paul Getty Trust. The Getty does manage ARCHES, an open-source GIS inventory platform that is free; there are instances of this program's being used in a wide variety of geographic settings.

Time Frames

In multiple ways, time represents a significant and arbitrary constraint in the cultural heritage field as elsewhere. The way that resources typically are committed and disbursed is tied to a funder's fiscal year. Numerous stakeholders commented about the potentially positive impact from relatively modest changes to contractual provisions. Of significance would be the automatic flexibility to allow funding to spill over into subsequent reporting cycles rather than evaporate or be committed hastily before what ultimately is an artificial deadline that bears no relationship to the specifics of a violent conflict or natural disaster.

"Multiyear funding," according to one operational funder, "is incredibly important in ensuring end results." In referring to this organizational "luxury" resulting from the philanthropic character of operations, the interviewee pointed to abrupt and untimely ends to projects after an arbitrary period as wasteful; "lacking continuity" was an obvious explanation for numerous failures.

Another time-based funding issue arising in conversations was the need to even out waves of funding that typically have short durations and arrive unpredictably. Complaints reflected unknown *crises du jour* as well as ones that have become seemingly permanent. Examples of the Smithsonian's ability to have funds spill over from one year to another and the University of Delaware's three-year partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Department of State were cited as steps in the right direction. In fact, DoS resources often have multiyear programming possibilities, a practice that could be expanded and emulated by other funders.

The domestic implementation in the United States of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA) of 1983, necessitates a bilateral agreement between a country and the United States before the US Government can support any investments in cultural heritage. The facilitation of these agreements is one of the core functions of the Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the Department of State. Putting together the requisite paperwork is onerous and time intensive, a task that should be completed long before violent conflict flares in a country. This lesson was reinforced by the fact that in the 2011 Arab Spring, no country in the Middle East had a memorandum of understanding in place; Egypt became the first, but in the wake of significant looting of artifacts. The CHC is expanding efforts to make agreements available to interested partner countries who meet the conditions of the CPIA. For those that do not have an agreement when a crisis erupts, the CHC should explore alternative means to assist such overburdened and understaffed countries in finalizing agreements as well as drafting proposals and progress reports.

Proliferation and Lack of Coordination

Long-standing concerns with protecting cultural heritage have received new and widespread attention in the last few decades. But the growth in organizations and funding has complicated coordination challenges.

One approach to growth has been encouraging more basic and applied research of the heritage sector. Some academic and museum work has focused on responses to ongoing crises—earlier references were made to funding by the J. Paul Getty Trust, the World Monuments Fund, UNESCO, and scholars at such institutions as the University of Pennsylvania and University of Chicago. Handling emergencies is an essential aspect of work in the cultural heritage field, but it is inadequate without more sustained investigations into underlying systemic issues, a prerequisite in responses and recovery. The 2023 Social Science Research Council's literature review about cultural heritage and violent conflict provides a model. It should be updated regularly and expanded to cover such other more specialized topics as non-state actors. In addition, it would be useful to compile and maintain a list of organizations, websites, and relevant contacts in an accessible fashion comparable to the original V&A portal. A first step could be developing a protocol for the standardization of entries.

The US Department of State's Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee was cited as a salient example of information sharing that contributes to improved coordination. Yet, that effort has limited impact beyond the members of the CHCC itself because non-governmental entities working in the heritage arena are largely excluded. If membership cannot be enlarged—because of US Government regulations—then more outreach, interaction, and reporting to nongovernmental actors are desirable. Much of the CHCC's deliberations, minutes of meetings, and even reports are unavailable to the public or to interested observers outside of the US Government.

Other examples of effective coordination networks that could shed light on future collaboration efforts include the previously mentioned Grant Makers in Cultural Heritage Preservation as well as the Heritage Emergency National Task Force (HENTF), which are both public-private partnerships. HENTF is co-chaired by FEMA and the Smithsonian. The coordination efforts of individual members, at least according to several interlocutors, permit leveraging resources and expertise for specific crises within the United States. Coordination, however incomplete, is at least expected and its absence viewed as a shortcoming—modest steps toward improved effectiveness and accountability among the sixty-two federal government agencies and private organizations that compose HENTF.

Comparable arrangements attempting to foster coordination at the international level would be even more challenging but are not only desirable but also essential. Interlocutors identified the obvious political constraints and shortcomings of intergovernmental organizations in this as in other fields. Nonetheless, the announced US return to UNESCO will be helpful, as would the proposed creation of a voluntary network of major US institutions for an expanding and decentralized sector.

Crises also can result in creative administrative responses. For instance, many domestic and international interviewees pointed to SCRI, which arose from a natural disaster, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, but subsequently has aided cultural heritage protection in such human-made disasters as Syria, Iraq, Mali, and Ukraine. One funder described the mobilization of the US's primary cultural institution for such crises as "a game changer." The politically charged differences in determining the feasibility of responding to natural and human-made emergencies have not disappeared even when they are housed in the same organizational entity.[28]

Interviewees, mainly insiders, criticized the Smithsonian's record of having mobilized insignificant staff and resources for ready-made, in-house capacity to react quickly to crises. Nonetheless, praise emanated from outside as well as inside the Smithsonian for the occasional mobilization of subject matter expertise across the institution to respond to on-the-ground needs in times of armed conflict as well as natural disasters; support included fostering capacity building and resilience in the longer term. One suggestion was that SCRI could compile a comprehensive roster of eligible expertise from US museums and universities, who would be available in crises and willing to be seconded to Smithsonian projects.

Cultural heritage protection is dynamic, especially in disasters and emergencies, and the need for creative adaptation is constant. One refreshing recommendation was "Don't look down on ad hocery and serendipity!" Understanding the nature of fieldwork is essential from a planning and coordination perspective. Governing boards and funders should become more aware of the

A US tank takes up position outside the Iraqi National Museum following looting of the museum. Baghdad, Iraq, April 16, 2003. Photo by Oleg Nikishin / Getty Images.

A UN solider patrols in front of a rebuilt mausoleum in Timbuktu, Mali, in 2021. The tombs were destroyed by jihadists in 2012 despite their placement on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger. Photo by Michele Cattani / AFP via Getty Images.

extent to which some failures and shortcomings in project execution are inevitable. Risks are involved; building understanding about expectations and legitimate experiments could help foster support for work in such arduous circumstances as Afghanistan, which prompted this project.

Turf Consciousness

The problem of turf consciousness is widely recognized, but diminishing its impact seemingly flies in the face of institutional imperatives for resource mobilization that would be threatened in the short run. Genuine laments unsurprisingly outnumbered examples of ways to reduce intra- and inter-organizational rivalries. According to one funder, fixing the problem was straightforward if not easy: "It's all about institutional will."

The perennial shortfall in available resources explains but does not justify what no one disputes is unproductive competition. One interviewee highlighted that "it's the responsibility of funding organizations to hold people to a high standard of collaborative behavior." Another noted the rivalry among supposedly like-minded groups working on heritage preservation. The friction was manifested even by "withholding basic information."

Implementing agencies are essentially pursuing the same sources of funding, but turf consciousness could and should be attenuated. A potential mechanism could be more pools of money with a precondition of joint proposals by multiple organizations so that incentives for cooperation would be built in as part of the application process. Using an "open call" for such collaboration could stimulate a search for collaborators that might not otherwise occur. Such a procedure could diminish competition by more specialized organizations making joint proposals with complementary agencies rather than pretending that they possess all geographical, language, and sectoral specializations. Precedents include proposals for some of the special funds available in pursuit of the UN's Millennium and now Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs and SDGs) as well as research funds for universities and think tanks applying for consideration by the European Union.

Capacity Building and Long-term Sustainable Partnerships

The substantial destruction of Ukrainian sites and theft of cultural heritage led to a counterfactual: "What would Ukraine look like today if there had been more attention and capacity building earlier?" This query could imply that the scope of heritage damage—intentional or collateral—is connected to poor local capabilities. In fact, Ukrainian heritage professionals were operating at an international heritage-management standard prior to Russia's invasion. These professionals had benefitted from connections to international peers since 1991 and an independent heritage infrastructure.

In addition to increasing personnel on the ground, however, capacity building entails documentation of holdings and sites with photos, dimensions, and models as a pillar of proactive management, and reconstruction when necessary. It also entails professionalizing jobs across a museum or heritage site. Expanding training so that the heritage community understands the concerns and cultures of humanitarians and the military, and vice versa, has not been but should be a higher priority that could have a beneficial impact on prevention.

Numerous interviewees endorsed such efforts as a general policy and pointed to efforts underway; at the very least, the rhetoric of relying on local partners was almost universal. For instance, "the need for capacity building activities on enhancement and protection of cultural heritage for relevant national institutions has been prioritised by most EU delegations."[29] Digital documentation efforts range from the object level in museums to scanning entire buildings and cities, to nationwide and regional mapping of sites. Useful projects are underway that could be replicated more widely, namely, to photograph and 3D-scan collection objects, archives, and perishable media. Many are at risk due to conflict, climate change, or the lack of resources to preserve these irreplaceable items.

Technology facilitates such herculean tasks of documenting seemingly innumerable heritage assets; projects are viewed as cost-effective for implementers and beneficiaries. However, the same countries that lack infrastructure to adequately document and protect their heritage undoubtedly are unprepared to maintain high-tech and often proprietary software and sensitive collection equipment. Documentation efforts should be coordinated with such disparate capacities in mind. On a

more positive note, one practitioner noted "a silver lining to the pandemic" was the demonstration of how much continued training could be accomplished online.

At the same time, technology can be a red herring, as several seasoned interlocutors noted. Would a millimeter-level laser scan of the Bamiyan Buddhas have prevented their destruction? The obviously negative reply to that query is followed by a more complex one. Would a reconstruction of one of the Buddhas with such a scan be welcomed by Afghans and the international heritage community, or derided as a soulless facsimile? Such questions are being asked in academic circles in the West, where authenticity is an irrefutable but contested requirement in determining whether elements of the past are significant. Scholars from Afghanistan and Iraq are generally not part of the discussion unless they are expatriates or dissidents.

As noted, several promising at-risk programs for scholars and practitioners are active within US academic institutions. Interviewees stressed the desirability of developing special visa waivers and procedures. They also suggested a placement service for the second and third years of a meaningful fellowship—extending the stay of someone already in the United States is more cost-effective than expanding the number of fellowship recipients. Given the newness of many programs and the difficulties in administering them, it is time for an assessment of existing capacities in higher education as well as the practical capabilities of government sponsorship. The Smithsonian has expertise in placement services as well as other areas; it could welcome more fellows and focus on building their skills. But first there should be a larger program to identify needs, design improvements, and assess the efficacy of at-risk programs once participants return home.

It is critical to invest in expertise at appropriate career moments rather than repeat annual elementary training, which interlocutors argued was the widespread practice. The Smithsonian has the capability to strategically approach and tailor capacity building. However, it currently does not have the administrative apparatus to look holistically at the heritage establishment in a given country, assess its needs, and design an effort to improve conditions over time—well before the country is suffering from the upheaval of a crisis. Despite gaps of in-house expertise—for example, in historic preservation (architectural conservation)—the Smithsonian could

leverage its trusted brand to convene others to reinforce and expand capacity building.

A field-wide trend mentioned by nearly all interviewees is deeper local engagement, including local leadership and in-country management of heritage projects. The changing norms around local as opposed to international, and especially Western, leadership are more and more widely understood as a prerequisite to render initiatives more effective and their impacts more sustainable. For example, ALIPH will not give grants without a local partner substantively involved in the application, and CER describes itself as working to "decolonize grants." Cultural Emergency Response views its role as a bridge organization advocating for the importance of the work and ensuring available funding, and working with partners on the ground to make sure they have strong systems to implement their projects. Their model of establishing regional hubs for cultural emergency response is an innovation, although questions about longer-term financial sustainability remain.

Staff Turnover

Turnover with the resulting loss of expertise and institutional memory are common problems across the humanitarian and sustainable development sectors, and this generalization applies to cultural heritage workers as well. As noted, a core explanation for turnover is burnout. Interviewees had no doubts about the "passion" and "care" of most people working in the sector, but they "can't be a 9-to-5 job." Many mentioned the heightened stress on staff who are wearing multiple hats; too few people are working full time on any given issue or even a specific country. In a field revolving around crises and instability, staff are routinely pushed to respect tight timelines and jump from one crisis to the next.

Potential ways to combat unacceptably high turnover in personnel include funding more full-time staff in addition to training more and better local counterparts. Moreover, there should be more time to upgrade staff training and development, including adequate resources for mental health and R&R. This often overlooked but critical element in insecure field settings is applicable to stress in headquarters as well. The ICRC, for instance, routinely asks head delegates to unpack their previous experience in headquarters before heading back to the field; their reports help institutional learning as well as benefit the individuals.

Elsewhere, more organizations are authorizing similar short sabbaticals; a limited number of UN staff, for instance, are encouraged to take them after a designated period, which is especially crucial for those working in zones of violent conflict. These three-to-six-month sabbaticals provide an important opportunity for staff to recharge batteries and identify lessons from lived experience; they also add to the breadth of educational expertise at universities (where most sabbaticals take place). These breaks could also be used for staff to do something else in the field, such as contributing to a host-country university program or working on skill development that they would not be able to balance with the normal duties of their regular jobs.

Poor Integration in Humanitarian Action

A serious shortcoming is the poor integration of cultural heritage into humanitarian planning and field operations, domestically and internationally. In the United States, the level of commitment to cultural heritage from USAID has been minimal, which could and should be altered so that some development projects include efforts to preserve and rebuild cultural heritage as well as train local cultural professionals. In addition, USAID's sporadic and noncommittal participation in the CHCC is hard to fathom; it could and should be remedied.

The lack of relevant and readily available information about the role of cultural heritage among popular audiences is undoubtedly a barrier for many non-heritage organizations as well. The discrete, focused activities of humanitarian organizations—governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental—as well as of the military are directly relevant for heritage responders, who are unlikely to understand the "cultures" and prerogatives of their potential non-heritage partners. One interviewee commented, "We've made a lot of progress on that over the years as . . . people's cultural heritage is what they need to survive. It is their hope and prosperity moving forward." The silos within the heritage community, according to numerous interviewees, were at least a partial explanation for the superficial understanding of the importance of heritage targeting and destruction as a tactic and strategy in armed conflict, and of its role in post-conflict renewal, reconciliation, and investment.

The issue of cultural heritage has become more visible in the last few decades, not only to practitioners but also to the public. However, it is far from being fully

mainstreamed in policy discussions—not only of humanitarian action but also of peace operations, peace building, and sustainable development. Nonetheless, NATO has moved into this area over the last few years, for instance, with a conference in February 2023 on "Cultural Property Protection and NATO: Experiences, Practices and Trends." In the same month, multiple departments of the UN Secretariat in New York attended an off-the-record conversation on "Cultural Heritage, Violent Conflict and Atrocity Crimes" organized by the Social Science Research Council and the J. Paul Getty Trust. It is time for the cultural heritage community to move toward a greater awareness and integration of non-heritage perspectives and priorities into their own programming, training, and evaluations.

In this regard, a relevant international process is in the United Nations: OCHA's Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP). It aims to bring together aid organizations for specific crises jointly to plan, coordinate, implement, and monitor their responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies. The CAP, in theory at least, assembles all identified needs for resources and thus facilitates the appeal for funds justifiably, cohesively, and collectively instead of competitively. Cultural heritage should be integrated into this umbrella process for resource mobilization on behalf of vulnerable populations.

Interlocutors encouraged more integration or even just more familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of other sectors and the host of related actors at all levels. Hence, there should be far more cross-sector and interdisciplinary collaboration for conducting joint basic and applied research, policy, and training. In addition, concerted and cooperative advocacy among the most pertinent heritage, humanitarian, and security organizations could result in better government policies and more public and private financial support.

Evaluation and Evidence

More basic and applied research are necessities for the cultural heritage field. Investigations to date have largely been isolated or reactive and located in individual museums, universities, and think tanks. One activist noted, "We need research and fieldwork to underpin policy arguments." The paucity of scholarship—the same interviewee noted the "poor knowledge base that had not risen to the level of demand"—is presumably related at least partially to the underdevelopment of

museum and heritage studies at the degree level in the United States and elsewhere. The "need for professionalization," especially at the MA and PhD levels, was a frequent theme across interviews. Efforts to alter the supply-and-demand equation were essential, according to numerous interlocutors, and an important additional stimulus would be efforts to diversify the supply side of future museum and other heritage institutions. As part of efforts to build and improve fields of specialization and concentration in the United States, consideration should be given, according to several interviewees, to a "center of excellence" that could use data-driven investigation to formulate policies and solutions. Of especial pertinence is the crucial importance of researching and evaluating the links between cultural destruction and atrocity crimes, and between cultural heritage deterioration and sustainable development (especially as a result of climate change).

There are clear advantages to heritage institutions' commissioning investigations from research universities. Such research serves the dual function of contributing to the scientific and academic literatures as well to institutional knowledge in the commissioning organizations—and hopefully beyond in the wider preservation community. In this regard, specific reference was made to the global monitoring capability for cultural heritage sites threatened by armed conflict and natural disasters that is provided by the Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab (CHML) at the Virginia Museum of Natural History, as a partner of the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative.

In reflecting on the utility of a potential center of excellence for a future international cultural heritage network, a related example comes to mind: the establishment and expansion over almost three decades of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) for humanitarian action.[30] It illustrates how to

diminish the pressures for competition and branding as well as reward the search for evidence and the sharing of information and evaluations. It began, like many reforms, stimulated by an embarrassing crisis response and public relations disaster. It grew organically from the 1995 multidonor examination and its multivolume *The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda*.[31] The stimulus was the chaotic preparations for and wasteful and tardy reactions to the real-time 1994 genocide. The ALNAP global network of some one-hundred and more dues-paying members (with a sliding scale based on annual budgets) is composed of NGOs, UN organizations, members of the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, donors, academics, networks, and consultants. Hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London—financed mainly by the UK Department for International Development but with contributions from other states (including USAID), foundations, and organizations—the ALNAP network is dedicated to learning how to improve international responses to humanitarian crises.

The result is the voluntary sharing of knowledge, reports, and evaluations from previous and ongoing efforts with a view toward making an expanding and decentralized system function better. To facilitate learning among members, a small secretariat hosts and updates an internet site for evaluations and reports; it also sponsors applied research that is discussed by members in periodic seminars and conferences.

25 https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/culture-in-crisis/.

26 With a secretariat at the Department of State since 2016 pursuant to the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act, the members include the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian Institution, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the National Archives and Records Administration.

27 https://www.artloss.com/chard/#:~:text=Since%20 1990%2C%20the%20Art%20Loss,consisting%20of%20 over%20700%2C000%20items.

28 The distinction remains valid for describing the relatively uncontroversial responses to natural disasters although many environmental critics argue that there are few purely natural disasters because of the human contribution to an increasing number of climate-change-induced emergencies.

29 European External Action Service, *2023 Report*, 38.

30 https://www.alnap.org/.

31 The four volumes and a synthesis volume were published in 1995 by the Danish International Development Agency, https://www.humanitarianlibrary.org/resource/joint-evaluation-emergency-assistance-rwanda-study-iii-principal-findings-and-0.

The Neretva River bank after the destruction of the Stari Most (Mostar Bridge) and most of the historic town of Mostar in 1993 during the Bosnian War. Photo by AP Photo / Zoran Bozicevic.

The Mostar Bridge and much of the old town was rebuilt in 2004 with support from UNESCO. February 2018. Photo by Abdullah Çadırcı / Pexels.

4

Where Do We Go from Here?

This report ends where it began, with the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art's commitment to improving crisis planning and future responses to threats to immovable and movable cultural heritage. The interviews and preceding analysis provide some clear paths forward. Several relatively "easy" fixes emerge, including funder flexibility in reporting and use of funds; open-call projects based on collaboration; new positioning on the importance of protection of cultural heritage; expanding and extending placement opportunities for heritage personnel refugees at universities and museums; and providing staff more "down" and download time as well as better training.

Other suggestions will require greater political and institutional will as well as substantial investments. They include policy shifts that incorporate heritage into humanitarian responses; centers of excellence for basic as well as applied research and data collection; special visa waivers and streamlined procedures; expanding staff on the ground; and increased collaboration with local communities.

Two areas in which the NMAA believes that it can make enhanced contributions were contextualized and confirmed by this project—capacity building and a voluntary international network. Along with colleagues throughout the Smithsonian, staff at the NMAA have long participated in skill building for partner institutions. Because of its history, standing, and expertise, the NMAA is determined to play a larger role in addressing undercapacity in regions represented in its collection. Building the skills and the confidence of colleagues is one tool to help protect cultural heritage in times of crisis, mitigate risks of looting and trafficking of objects, and build a more resilient heritage field. A first concrete outcome of the project is the NMAA's considering a skill-building and exchange program that aspires to be replicable and sustainable.

Together with its Smithsonian partner units, the museum can also play a role—perhaps a key role—in the international network, albeit with appropriate expectations about what could be reasonably achieved in the short term. "The long-run viability of the sector," one interlocutor stated categorically, "needs a global umbrella." Skepticism about UNESCO's multilateral politics and

operational capacities cannot be finessed in the foreseeable future nor can the need to leverage partial existing networks like the CHCC and HENTF.

The network could be broad-gauged and encompass art museums, cultural institutions, universities, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and government agencies—including the Department of State and the Department of Defense. It could raise consciousness about the vulnerability of tangible cultural heritage and the workers that preserve it. It could begin with an effort to bring together expertise and resources (financial and personnel) of key organizations and funders in the United States. Relevant experience comes from the public-private partnership to protect cultural heritage in the United States, the Heritage Emergency National Task Force.

The year 2024 provides a symbolically apt moment to think creatively and energetically about the issues covered by this report: namely, the 70th anniversary of the entry into force of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This report will serve as a background document for a 2024 expert workshop for some 25–30 professionals to consider this report's analysis and to brainstorm about the viability and feasibility of a voluntary network.

All peoples share a common human heritage—as intricate, complex, and representative of diverse cultures as they may be. The existing institutional system to protect this heritage is well-intentioned but at best loosely knit and

ill-prepared for emergency responses. This report is a modest but hopefully meaningful step in mobilizing the rich and real potential of public and private institutions that care deeply about the lives and cultural heritage of people and the communities with which they identify. Rather than merely a laudable but distant objective, it should be possible to utter the expression "never again" and make it a reality for protecting heritage and humans.

Annex 1

Institutions Consulted

Individuals were interviewed from the following institutions under the Chatham House Rule between October 2022 and August 2023. Specific units have not been identified to ensure anonymity. Other institutions were approached for their views, but they were unavailable for interviews within the constraints of this project's duration.

Antiquities Coalition

Bank of America

Blue Shield
- International
- US Committee

Cultural Emergency Response

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Geneva Call

Getty

Global Heritage Fund

Harvard University

International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas

International Committee of the Red Cross

International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Academy

J. M. Kaplan Fund

McGill University

Mellon Foundation

National Geographic

Smithsonian Institution

Social Science Research Council

Turquoise Mountain

United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Center

United States Government
- Department of Defense
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of State

University of Chicago

University of Copenhagen, Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict Centre

University of Geneva

University of Pennsylvania

Victoria and Albert Museum

World Monuments Fund

Yale University

Annex 2

Research Questionnaire

The efforts to identify the challenges confronting more coherent and cohesive cultural heritage protection in crises suggest areas of inquiry that we have grouped into five categories. We suspect that the mapping exercise and the interviews will shed light on the distinct types of facts and perceptions that will form part of our report that will be shared with the public. This research, the interviews, and the conversations that surround them should provide an opportunity for folks to take a step back and reflect on the field and the work being done.

Mission

What do you see as your organization's comparative advantages or distinctive niche in the marketplace of ideas/norms/research/standard-setting, on the one hand, versus field operations and training, on the other hand?

Recent Experiences

Could you discuss successful examples of prevention (before a crisis) versus reaction (during a crisis) versus reconstruction (after a crisis) that you have seen in the field or experienced in your own work? Where is the most potential for synergies?

Funding and Incentives

What are examples of cooperation and incentives that have fostered interagency (or interorganizational) collaboration? Are there examples of counterproductive competition for resources or publicity/visibility that stand out?

The Political Moment and Future of the Field

What is the impact on heritage protection of today's politics, and is the moment propitious for initiatives? What priorities should guide the future work in the cultural heritage field?

The Smithsonian

The Smithsonian line of inquiry aims to deepen and broaden the Smithsonian's work and its collaborations; we can draw connections between what the SI can do and what the world needs. In that vein, what would you like to see on the Smithsonian's strategic agenda?

Annex 3

About the Contributors

Thomas G. Weiss (lead author) is Emeritus Presidential Professor of Political Science, the CUNY Graduate Center Distinguished Fellow, Global Governance, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs; and Global Eminence Scholar, Kyung Hee University, Korea. He recently was Co-chair of the J. Paul Getty Trust's Heritage at Risk Project and co-editor of the resulting *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*. Past Andrew Carnegie Fellow and president of the International Studies Association and recipient of its "Distinguished IO Scholar Award," chair of the Academic Council on the UN System, editor of *Global Governance*, and Research Director of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, he has written extensively about the United Nations, global governance, international peace and security, humanitarian action, sustainable development, and cultural heritage.

Brian Michael Lione is the International Cultural Heritage Protection Program Manager at the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute. He leads capacity-building efforts for Iraqi heritage professionals at the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage in Erbil, and on site, post-ISIS recovery efforts at the Mosul Cultural Museum and at the ancient archaeological city of Nimrud. He also serves on the Smithsonian's Rural Initiative Working Group and supports anti-trafficking training for US law enforcement as well as response and recovery training for domestic and international heritage specialists.

Ella Weiner works on the Global Affairs team at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. Her focus is on cultural heritage protection and preservation, conducting research to identify measures to mitigate risks and respond effectively to protect both objects and people. She also facilitates international relations for the museum, including global partnerships and projects. Prior to NMAA, Ella worked for the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative on training for preparedness and response to disasters, intergovernmental collaboration focused on preserving cultural heritage, and strategic communications.

Annex 4

List of Abbreviations

ALIPH   International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas

ALNAP   Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance

ANCBS   Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield

ASEAN   Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CAP   Consolidated Appeal Process

CER   Cultural Emergency Response

CHARD   Cultural Heritage at Risk Database

CHC   Cultural Heritage Center

CHCC   Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee

CHML   Cultural Heritage Monitoring Lab

CPIA   Cultural Property Implementation Act

DAC   Development Assistance Committee [OECD]

DHS   Department of Homeland Security [US]

DoD   Department of Defense [US]

DoS   Department of State [US]

ERF   Emergency Response Fund [USAID]

EU   European Union

FBI   Federal Bureau of Investigation

FEMA   Federal Emergency Management Agency

HENTF   Heritage Emergency National Task Force [FEMA, Smithsonian]

ICBS   International Committee of the Blue Shield

ICISS   International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty

ICRC   International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC   International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IGO   intergovernmental organization

IHL   international humanitarian law

INTERPOL   International Criminal Police Organization

ISIS   Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

KFOR   Kosovo Force [NATO]

MCI   Museum Conservation Institute [Smithsonian]

MDGs   Millennium Development Goals [UN]

MINUSMA   United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

NEH   National Endowment for the Humanities

NGO   nongovernmental organization

NMA   National Museum of Afghanistan

NMAA   National Museum of Asian Art [Smithsonian]

NSF   National Science Foundation

OCHA   Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UN]

ODI   Overseas Development Institute

OECD   Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFDA   Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance [US]

OIR   Office of International Relations [Smithsonian]

R2P   Responsibility to Protect

SCRI   Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

SOPs   standard operating procedures

UNESCO   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR   Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

V&A   Victoria and Albert Museum