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The Role of the United Nations in Peace and Conflict: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines critically the role of the United Nations (UN) in dealing with the various existing conflicts around the world and the issues it faces in fulfilling its fundamental mission of peace and security. In spite of the fact that the UN plays a pivotal role in the management of international issues, it is not effectively responding towards complex crisis situations, especially in some regions like Palestine, Ukraine, the Middle East, South Asia, etc since 2020. The limitations of the UN to adapt to rapidly changing geopolitical landscapes and conflicting interests of member states are apparent in these respective regions. This is the credibility of the UN's collapse in Afghanistan specifically and the Security Council generally with the focus on how the UN has responded to the conflicts through peacemaking efforts, humanitarian assistance and diplomatic action. It examines UN's successes and failures in these areas with important obstacles reducing its effectiveness, such as politics tearing it apart, a lack of resources, and a lack of enforcement power. The aim of the study is to assess the overall effectiveness of the UN and the external and internal challenges it is facing in conflict resolution. By means of this study, content analysis of secondary sources has been adopted, which included the official UN reports, resolutions and academic literature as well as the news articles and the expert analyses. By combing through these materials, the paper presents a comprehensive picture of the UN's interventions and outcomes of those interventions. Results from the research showed that although the UN has made significant attempts in intervening in situations, it is often disabled by political and structural constraints. The study concludes that there is a great need for reform in order to enhance the UN's ability to respond better and more impartially to global challenges.

Keywords:

United Nations, Conflict Resolution, International Peace and Security, UN Security Council, Geopolitical Conflicts, Humanitarian Assistance, Peacekeeping, Diplomatic Engagement, Institutional Limitations, UN Reform.

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Introduction

Peace and security hold unparalleled importance for global stability and progress in this critical juncture of the world. With expanding uncertainty in geopolitical tensions, economic instability, and devastating environmental crises, peace and security is the need of time (Chinemeren, & Ezeonwuka, 2025). Conflicts and crisis in regions like Ukraine, the Middle East, and South Asia continue and expanding to disturbed not only the affected countries system but also the broader global order (Ikenberry, 2024). Human have been killed and suffered due to the aforementioned conflicts, massive displacement occurred, major decline in the economic structure, affecting millions of people throughout the world and long-term instability caused. For global cooperation, peace and security is most important as it provide opportunities to work, cooperate and seek venues towards development (Voicu, 2023). The absence of peace and security in one part can have alarming global effects, critical threat to security , economic stability, and social well-being in this globalized and interdependent world, (Mastrojeni, 2017). Furthermore, for addressing grave challenges like climate change, poverty and health crisis faced by world sustainable peace and security is necessary. Without peace, efforts to resolve and combat these issues become fragmented and less effective. In this way, the role of international organization like the United Nations becomes most importnat in maintaining peace and helping conflict resolution (Vidadiovich, 2017). However, for peace to be lasting, it must go beyond the absence of war. It needed to address the root causes of crisis and conflict among nations, including inequality, injustice, and human rights violations. The importance of peace is not only political but also moral, as it upholds the dignity and rights of individuals across nations. In this time, prioritizing peace and security is essential for maintaining a better, more stable and progressive future for all. The world must cooperate to unite to create a balance systems that maintain peace, not only in conflict regions, but throughout the world to ensure collective peace, security, development and prosperity (Mendez, 1999).

The United Nations (UN) is a crucial international body that was founded in 1945 and aims to foster peace, security, social progress and cooperation between nations (White, 1997). It was designed in the wake of World War II in an effort to prevent future wars, to enforce human rights, and to promote international cooperation (Iriye, Goedde, & Hitchcock, (Eds.) 2012). Its main aims are maintenance of peace and security in the world, promotion of human rights, assistance to social and economic development and humanitarian aid in times of crisis (Familoye, & Toyin, 2024). The UN also aims to provide members of the states to discuss and resolve the international issues diplomatically (Wiseman, 2015). Since its founding, the UN has played an important role in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and supporting sustainable development worldwide (Gledhill, Caplan, & Meiske, 2021).

However, in the current critical juncture of the world there has been the challenge that the performance of the UN has come under considerable pressure. Barrier Course in contemporary time: Examples of ongoing conflicts in parts of the world such as Ukraine, Palestine, Middle East nations and South Asia draw out the shortcomings of the UN peacekeeping and mediators. (Ayub, 2024). The organization has often been hampered by political divisions among its member states, which can hamper the organization's ability to make decisions and to be effective. The Security Council in particular, has been criticised for its inability to act decisively in situations where major powers have conflicting interests which results in deadlock (Johnstone, 2003).

Furthermore, constraints in resources, as well as lack of enforcement mechanisms, have also hampered UN's inability to deal with global crises effectively (Familoye, & Toyin, 2024). Despite these issues, the UN is still a UN organization that is vital for the governing body in the world. Its specialized agencies, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), continue to be instrumental in playing a key role in solving

current world problems such as health crises and looking after children. In the face of climate change, poverty and threats to global health, the UN's work has never become more necessary (Patz, Frumkin, Holloway, Vimont, & Haines, 2014). However, to cope with the demands of the modern world, there needs to be reforms to increase its ability to respond in a fast and impartial way. Strengthening the UN's capacity for conflict resolution, improving resource allocation and achieving greater unity among member states are critical for ensuring that it remains relevant in working to ensure the continued maintenance of international peace and security.

Objectives

1. To critically analyzed the role of United Nations in maintaining peace and Security.
2. To explored the challenges to United Nations.

Methodology

The study is to investigate the performance and challenges of the United Nations, and focus on the understanding of its effectiveness for the global issues. Given that the UN operations are complex, the qualitative approach will be more appropriate when it comes to gaining deeper insights regarding the operations of the UN, its successes, and shortcomings.

The qualitative design is being conducted in this research as the form of secondary data is the channel of content analysis. The different sources were researched such as scholarly articles, official UN reports, books and also good sources on the Internet. A systematic review of these materials reveals these recurrent themes, patterns and narratives that are involved with the performance of UN and the threats it encounters. The methodology allows to investigate the successes and areas of concern and structural, political and operational issues of concern in detail on the organization. It was stressed to see information in numerous ways in order to have a balanced perception. A portion of the worth of the utilization of the secondary sources, however, was to offer an historical and up to date view of the role undertaken by the UN in the governance of the world, in peacekeeping and humanitarian activities too.

By conducting qualitative content analysis, using the already available kind of literatures and documented reports that the research entails, it is able to generate an in depth knowledge of what the UN has done and what efforts have been difficult. In this manner, it is possible to be certain that the findings are highly justified and are supported by reliable evidence and present subtle information about how the organization works.

A Critical Analysis

The United Nations (UN) is a basic worldwide organization, which was made in 1945, at the end of World War II. Its creation was to deal with the devastating consequences of the war and to prevent the outbreak of wars in the future. The UN was founded on the dream of supporting world peace, security and cooperation between countries. One of its fundamental goals is to maintain international peace and security, prevent conflicts and promote human rights, contribute to social and economic development and provide humanitarian aid in times of crises. The UN also tries to open a platform for dialogue in which country can solve issues diplomatically and this will not require any military confrontation. Over the years, the UN has been involved in the front lines of peace keeping operations, conflict resolution and global governance.

The Performance of the United Nations: A Critical Analysis

The United Nations (UN) formed after the devastation of World War II in 1945, with the main duty to prevent further wars and to ensure international peace and security and promote cooperation between countries of the world. Its basic aims were to solve global problems through diplomacy, and through collective action, offer humanitarian relief, encourage human rights, and establish mechanisms of conflict resolution (White 1997). For many years, the UN has been instrumental in peacekeeping, humanitarian and international governance. However, as the world has changed and new complex world issues have emerged,

the performance of the UN has come under ever more scrutiny. Despite the notable contributions of the UN, there have been frequent cases over the years in which the organization has been unable to attain the goals and objectives, thereby leading to serious questions related to how effective and relevant the institution has been in the modern-day geopolitical space.

Political and Structural Challenges

One of the greatest obstacles to the effectiveness of the UN is internal political rifts within the UN and especially their Security Council. The Security Council was intended to be a place to solve international crises, but it has often been unable to act on a crisis because of the differing interests of its permanent members. These five permanent members of the United Nations, namely, the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France, have veto power over the resolutions (Berdal, 2003). This structure has created a scenario where the Security Council capabilities to resolve a crisis may be hindered by one veto, leaving the UN impotent in its bid to resolve pressing global problems. The continuing crisis in Syria is the best example of the UN's limitations to mediate a conflict. Despite the widespread international condemnation of the violence and human rights violations in Syria, the UN has not been able to take any meaningful action to stop the violence. Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, has always exercised its veto right against holding UN resolutions to impose sanctions or setting up mechanisms for peace keeping. As a consequence, the UN has been facing some of the most notable challenges in mitigating the human tolls of the Syrian conflict where more than 500,000 people have been killed, millions have been displaced, and the region is still in a state of ongoing instability (Lundgren, 2016).

Similarly, in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the UN has had a negligible success in enforcing its resolutions. Multiple Security Council resolutions have been passed by the Security Council calling for ending Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank and for finding a two-state solution (Sebastian, 2024, October). However, in spite of these calls, Israel has continued in their expanding settlements, as well as strengthening their occupation of Palestinian territories and with little to no consequences from the UN. The failure of the Security Council to enforce their resolutions further questions the relevance of the UN within the context of dealing with issues of long standing political sensitivity.

Resource Constraints and Operational Inefficiencies

Another question that gets raised and limits the effectiveness of UN is financial and logistic limitations. The institution is very much dependent on contributions from the countries of which the UN is composed in order to finance its activities, in particular, peacekeeping missions, humanitarian activities and specialized agencies. However, the allocation of resources has often been inadequate and the provided funding often do not consistently match up to the scope of challenges that the UN faces. The unreliability of the resources and the ineffectiveness of coordination and timely response have impacted the peacekeeping efforts of UN whereby military and civilian troops are dispatched to the conflict territories and help to maintain peace and order. Logistical challenges, financial meltdown and manpower have been witnessed being an example, the UN peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the case. Despite the fact that it is the presently the biggest and most expensive peacekeeping mission in the world, the MONUSCO has not been able to contain the present violence that is perpetrated by armed rebel groups in the region which has led to the killing and displacement of thousands and millions of people respectively. An illustration of these inefficiencies and limitations of the UN peacekeeping missions is the fact that the mission failed to play a decisive role in the governance of the Congo or in ensuring security and wellbeing of the civilian population and facilitating the fulfillment of human rights such as the promotion of political processes.

The UN's budget which goes to general peacekeeping operations in 2021 some \$6.5 billion. While this number seems like a lot the fact of the matter is that this is not enough of a

number with the increasing needs for peacekeeping missions around the world. The lack of funds has resulted in delays in the deployment of troops, under-equipped troops and low capacity of operations in conflict zones. These shortages of resources have made it difficult for the UN respond effectively and in a timely fashion in confronting crimes, that affect its credibility as a world peace keeping organization.

Lack of Enforcement Mechanisms

While UN possesses the ability of passing resolutions and issuing mandates, it has no machinery in place for the enforcement of its resolution and no capacity to do so. This lack of power has led to many UN resolutions being left without effect, this especially in a situation where powerful member states or non-state actors do not wish to comply with UN mandates, eg despite numerous UN resolutions demanding the cease of Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian territories, Israel continues to increase settlement activities in defiance of international law. The UN has repeatedly condemned the expansion of settlement but its inability to implement its resolutions has led to a sense of powerlessness in dealing with this issue. The same problem is true of the continuing war in Yemen, where the UN has not been able to introduce a ceasefire and a political solution because of the intervention by external powers, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran who are locked in a proxy war in the region. In situations of this kind the UN's inability to enforce itself is a serious factor that limit itself in its capabilities of bringing peace in these countries.

To an equal degree the UN has failed at implementing international sanctions on North Korea as a consequence of its nuclear weapon programmed. Although the UN Security Council has been imposing a series of sanctions to the country, they have been retraced many times as China and Russia who voted against or discredited sanctions in the Security Council. This un-enforceability creates more weakness in the status of UN to ensure global security and peace.

Humanitarian Crises and Slow Response

The UN's approach to humanitarian crises has had a similar theme of concern with the response to urgent situations being criticized for being sluggish, fragmented and insufficient. While UN agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are all on the frontlines providing aid, in a lot of instances, the overall response has been inadequate in humanitarian large scale emergencies.

In the case of Yemen, the continuous civil war has created one of the worst humanitarian situations in the world with 20 million people estimated to be food insecure as well as millions more displaced. The UN's response has been criticized because it was slow and was unable to overcome the logistical difficulties the warring factions were putting on it. The blockade that has been established by the Saudi led coalition has made it even harder for aid to reach Yemen leaving millions of Yemenis without access to basic necessities including food, clean water and medical care (Abohajeb, & Aldhlea, 2025).

Additionally, the refugee crisis created by the war in Syria and the instability in Afghanistan have created a huge stress on the humanitarian aspect of the UN. Despite the efforts of other organizations like the UNHCR to provide shelter and support for millions of homeless people, proportions of the crisis have gotten too big for the UN to effectively respond to it. Refugees in camps are often overcrowded, having no proper health care and/or basic service. This failure to adequately address the needs of the vulnerable populations goes on to serve as an exposure of the failure of the UN's humanitarian interventions.

Failure to Address Contemporary Global Challenges

Besides its challenges in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid, the UN has also had to struggle with modern challenges faced by the world including climate change, rising inequality and public health crises (Campbell-Lendrum, Neville, Schweizer, & Neira, 2023). The UN has made major progress as part of the fight against climate change, including the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. However, lack of binding commitments of major emitters United

States of America, China and India have defeated the efficacy of this global initiative. The exposure of the 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) revealed what challenges the UN is experiencing in marshaling forward momentum to set the bar high in setting climate goals. Without enforceable commitments and mechanisms for accountability, the UN's role in tackling climate change is limited. Similarly, efforts of the UN in supporting the world's health threats such as the Covid pandemic has been hampered by member state politics and logistical constraints (Albrecht, 2023). While the World Health Organization (WHO) have played an important role in coordinating the global response to the pandemic, and their efforts have been shaken by delays in data sharing, vaccine inequities and lack of coordination among nations. The lack of organization by the WHO of an equitable distribution of vaccines throughout the world, especially in poor countries, demonstrated the weaknesses of the UN in its ability to deal with global health crises.

The Need for Reform

Despite all the issues that it was faced with, the UN is an important institution when it comes to global governance. Its specialized agencies still have important roles to play in addressing issues such as poverty, health and human rights. However, in order to be relevant and effective in the face of the challenges in our modern world, the UN needs to go through a massive reform.

The reforms should be reproductive towards how to make the UN improve in decision making processes, particularly in the Security Council; in order to overcome the stalemate that develops through the application of the veto power. The UN should also step-up its peacekeeping operations by ensuring that they are well armed and that coordination between the member states is good. The organization must also have the capacity to increase its capacity to have resolutions and bring perpetrators to justice especially in the conflict zones involving the states which possess a military muscle. Besides, it is only natural that the UN reconciles to the change of the world through acting far faster and more integrated to the new challenges of climate change, inequality and global health.

Conclusion

Although the United Nations (UN) have done their level best in contributing to global peace, security and development, its performance has been curtailed by a series of significant challenges at some instances. Differences between member states have in many instances paralyzed the organization to act. The five permanent members of the Security Council have the veto power and this type of power has led to stagnation of the solution of the international crises which trigger an urgent action say in Syria, Palestine and Yemen. These wars have presented the ineffectiveness of the peacekeeping and mediation activities undertaken by UN.

Also, the UN has been experiencing numerous resource restraints and most of its initiatives have been underfunded not to mention the absence of proper enforcement strategies to make the member states responsible. This has been especially so when it comes to its reaction to global ills like climate change whereby there are no robust regulatory frameworks and penalties of failure to comply has mitigated change. The increase in inequality, the migration and environmental degradation crises implies the task which is facing the UN is even heavier to respond effectively. Although these difficulties have undermined the credibility of the UN in the contemporary world, it can be seen that the entity is vital in terms of world governance. Reforms in UN are therefore needed in ensuring that the organization is effective and better equipped in dealing with the modern issues. By solving these problems, and further enhancing its capability of making managerial decisions, become more efficient at allocating its resources and imposing its mandate in a more effective manner, the UN will be better predisposed to grapple with the realities of the 21st century and keep on performing its role of promoting global peace and development.

Recommendation

Reform the Security Council

In order to deal with inefficiencies granted under the current UN's decision-making process, it is important to reform the Security Council. This may be implemented through expanding its membership to countries of developing world powers, in particular countries belonging to the emerging global powers. Additionally, amending the veto system would also ensure that one country or group of countries cannot veto important resolutions resulting in more inclusive, representative and effective decision-making.

Secure Sustainable Funding

One of the biggest challenges faced by the UN is the instability of funding to its operation. To a large extent the UN are dependent of contributions from voluntary countries that are members which are unpredictable. To overcome on this problem, it is necessary to provide more institutions to finance it such as global fund or auto-contributions from member countries. This way the UN would have a consistent financial support on which it can work out its peace keeping, humanitarian and developmental missions without the constant threat of financial shortfalls.

Strengthen Peacekeeping Forces

The UN's peacekeeping operations are an important aspect of prevention and resolution of conflicts around the world. These missions, however, tend to be plagued with poor training, lack of resources and coordination. Strengthening of the peacekeeping forces by improving the training of the peacekeepers, giving the peacekeepers better resources and enabling better coordination between different UN agencies and countries, would make the peacekeeping forces more successful in stabilizing conflict zones and protecting vulnerable populations.

Enforce Global Accountability

For UN to maintain its credibility, it should be a better system of accountability of the countries in breach of the international laws and agreements. The establishment of explicit consequences in case of violation of these rules and a separate entity with a mandate to enforce these rules in case of violation would constitute an incentive not to violate these rules as well as an incentive for compliance with the global norms in the areas of human rights, environmental protection and conflict resolution.

Prioritize Climate Action

With climate change being one of the biggest threats of global security, the ability of the UN to take active role in dealing with this threat. Developing binding international agreements with means of enforcement of non-compliance would guarantee that all the member states comply with their climate target. The UN should help to increase more cooperation between countries so that it decreases the impacts of it on the environment and further damage to the climate.

Enhance Regional Partnerships

The UN needs more close working with regional organizations such as the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union in fighting conflicts and overcoming challenges related to a certain area. Strengthen these partnerships such that there can be more localized and context-specific solutions and increased efficiency and effectiveness of UN interventions in conflict resolution, humanitarian aid and development,

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