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THE FAILURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION (UNO) TO STOP WARS IN THE WORLD: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations Organization (UNO) was established in 1945 after the Second World War with the primary objective of maintaining international peace and security, preventing future wars, protecting human rights, and promoting cooperation among nations. Despite its important role in international relations, the United Nations has faced significant challenges in preventing and stopping wars across the world. Conflicts such as the Rwandan Genocide (1994), the Bosnian War (1992–1995), the Iraq War (2003), the Syrian Civil War (2011 onwards), and other international and internal conflicts have raised serious questions about the effectiveness of the United Nations. This research paper critically examines the reasons behind the failure of the UNO to stop wars. It focuses on the Security Council veto system, political interests of powerful countries, lack of military authority, limitations of peacekeeping operations, and the principle of state sovereignty. The paper argues that although the United Nations has contributed significantly to international peace, humanitarian assistance, and conflict resolution, its effectiveness is restricted by the political interests of its powerful member states. The study concludes that meaningful reforms in the Security Council, stronger peacekeeping mechanisms, and greater international cooperation are necessary to improve the organization's ability to maintain global peace.

Keywords: United Nations, international peace, war, Security Council, veto power, peacekeeping, international relations, global security.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Organization (UNO) was established on 24 October 1945 following the destruction and suffering caused by the Second World War. Its establishment represented an international effort to prevent another global conflict and create a peaceful international order. The main purpose of the United Nations, as stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter, is to maintain international peace and security and to take collective measures to prevent threats to peace. The organization currently serves as an important platform where countries discuss international disputes, negotiate agreements, and cooperate on global challenges. It also works to promote human rights, economic development, humanitarian assistance, and international law.

However, despite these objectives, wars and armed conflicts have continued in different parts of the world. The United Nations has been unable to prevent several major conflicts or stop violence once it has begun. The Rwandan Genocide in 1994 and the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 demonstrated serious weaknesses in the international community's ability to protect civilians. Similarly, the Syrian Civil War exposed the difficulties faced by the Security Council when its permanent members have conflicting political interests.These developments have created an important debate about whether the United Nations is capable of fulfilling its fundamental responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

The central argument of this research paper is that the UNO has not completely failed in its mission, but its ability to stop wars is significantly limited by political disagreements,

institutional weaknesses, and the dominance of powerful countries in international decision-making.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the role and objectives of the United Nations in maintaining international peace.
2. To analyse the reasons behind the failure of the UNO to prevent and stop wars.
3. To understand the impact of veto power on the functioning of the Security Council.
4. To examine major conflicts in which the United Nations failed to achieve peace.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations.
6. To suggest reforms that could strengthen the United Nations as an international peacekeeping organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper follows a qualitative and descriptive research methodology. It is based on secondary sources, including academic books, research journal articles, United Nations reports, international agreements, and official publications.The study examines selected international conflicts to understand the limitations of the United Nations in preventing and stopping wars. Historical and comparative analysis is used to identify institutional, political, and operational factors responsible for these limitations.

ROLE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN MAINTAINING WORLD PEACE

The United Nations was created to establish a system of collective security in which countries cooperate to prevent aggression and resolve international disputes peacefully.

According to the United Nations Charter (1945), its major objectives include:

> Maintaining international peace and security. Developing friendly relations among nations. Promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Encouraging international cooperation. Resolving international disputes through peaceful methods.

The Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security under Article 24 of the UN Charter. It can impose economic sanctions, establish peacekeeping missions, and authorize collective military action under appropriate circumstances.The United Nations also uses diplomacy, mediation, negotiation, humanitarian assistance, and peacekeeping operations to manage conflicts .However, the organization's ability to implement these measures depends heavily on the willingness and cooperation of its member states. Therefore, the gap between the objectives of the UN Charter and the political realities of international relations is one of the major reasons behind its limitations.

MAJOR REASONS BEHIND THE FAILURE OF THE UNO TO STOP WARS

Veto Power of the Permanent Members One of the biggest weaknesses of the United Nations is the veto power enjoyed by the five permanent members of the Security Council: the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. Under Article 27 of the UN Charter, a negative vote by any permanent member can prevent the adoption of a substantive Security Council resolution. This system was established to ensure the participation of major powers in international security decisions. However, it has also created

a situation in which the national interests of powerful countries can become more important than collective international peace.

For example, disagreements among permanent members have repeatedly prevented strong international action regarding the Syrian conflict. Melling and Dennett (2018) explain how the Security Council veto has limited the international response to mass atrocities in Syria.

Consequently, the veto system has become a major obstacle to effective international action.

POLITICAL INTERESTS OF POWERFUL COUNTRIES

The United Nations is an organization of sovereign states, and its decisions are strongly influenced by the political interests of its members. Powerful countries often prioritize national security, economic interests, military alliances, and geopolitical influence over collective international responsibilities. For instance, the Iraq War in 2003 demonstrated the limitations of the United Nations in preventing military intervention when major international powers disagree over the use of force.

Similarly, disagreements among powerful countries have complicated international efforts to resolve conflicts in Syria and other regions. Therefore, the United Nations sometimes becomes a platform for political competition rather than an effective instrument of collective action.

Lack of Independent Military Power Another major weakness of the United Nations is that it does not possess a permanent independent military force capable of intervening in every international conflict. UN peacekeeping missions depend on troops, equipment, financial contributions, and logistical support provided by member states .As a result, the organization cannot always respond quickly or effectively when a war begins. Furthermore, peacekeeping missions generally operate under specific mandates and depend on the consent and cooperation of the parties involved. This limitation reduces the ability of the United Nations to protect civilians in situations where armed groups or governments refuse to cooperate.

Principle of State Sovereignty The principle of state sovereignty protects the independence and territorial integrity of countries. Article 2(7) of the UN Charter limits intervention in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of states, subject to the Charter's enforcement provisions.Although sovereignty is important for maintaining international order, it can create difficulties when serious human rights violations occur within a country's borders. In certain situations, governments may use the principle of non-interference to resist international involvement, even when civilians are facing extreme violence.The international community therefore faces a difficult challenge in balancing state sovereignty with the responsibility to protect human populations.

Weaknesses in Peacekeeping Operations

UN peacekeeping operations have helped maintain ceasefires and reduce violence in several conflict-affected countries. However, they have also faced serious failures. Peacekeepers may operate with insufficient resources, unclear mandates, limited intelligence, and inadequate military capabilities. The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 is a significant example of these weaknesses. Despite warnings about the possibility of mass violence, the international response was insufficient to prevent the genocide.

Grünfeld and Vermeulen (2009) identify the failure to act on early warnings and the unwillingness of international decision-makers to take effective preventive measures as major factors behind the failures in Rwanda and Srebrenica. These incidents demonstrate that the

presence of UN peacekeeping personnel alone cannot guarantee peace without adequate political support and operational authority.

MAJOR EXAMPLES OF UN FAILURE IN STOPPING WARS

Rwandan Genocide (1994)

The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 remains one of the most serious examples of the failure of the international community to prevent mass violence. During approximately 100 days in 1994, hundreds of thousands of people, predominantly Tutsi and also moderate Hutu, were killed.The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was deployed before the genocide. However, the mission had a limited mandate, insufficient resources, and inadequate authority to prevent the large-scale killings. The international community failed to respond effectively despite warnings of the growing danger. Grünfeld and Vermeulen (2009) argue that the failure to recognize the urgency of the situation and the absence of decisive preventive action contributed to the tragedy. The Rwandan case exposed serious weaknesses in the UN's early-warning and conflict-prevention mechanisms.

Bosnian War and Srebrenica Massacre (1992–1995)

The Bosnian War was another major example of the limitations of the United Nations.During the conflict, the UN declared Srebrenica a safe area in 1993. However, in July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces captured the area and committed genocide, killing more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys. UN peacekeepers were unable to prevent the massacre despite the international protection arrangements. The United Nations Secretary-General's (1999) report on the fall of Srebrenica acknowledged serious mistakes in the international response, including weaknesses in the safe-area policy and the failure to provide adequate protection. This incident demonstrated that declaring an area safe without sufficient military resources and political commitment can create a false sense of security.

Iraq War (2003)

The Iraq War of 2003 raised serious questions about the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations in preventing the use of force.The United States and its allies launched military action against Iraq without obtaining a new Security Council resolution explicitly authorizing the invasion. The conflict demonstrated the limitations of the collective security system when powerful states choose to act outside the consensus of the Security Council. It also raised concerns about the ability of international institutions to enforce international law consistently against powerful countries.

Syrian Civil War (2011 Onwards)

The Syrian Civil War began in 2011 and developed into a complex conflict involving domestic armed groups and several international powers. The United Nations attempted to promote negotiations, humanitarian assistance, and political solutions. However, the Security Council faced repeated disagreements, particularly among its permanent members. Melling and Dennett (2018) explain that the veto system significantly weakened the Council's ability to respond effectively to mass atrocities in Syria. The conflict demonstrated that when powerful countries support opposing sides, international organizations face considerable difficulties in achieving a common political solution.

The Russia-Ukraine War (2014–2024) The conflict between Russia and Ukraine developed in 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of fighting in eastern Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolutions condemning Russia's aggression and calling

for the withdrawal of Russian forces. However, the Security Council was unable to adopt enforcement measures against Russia because Russia is a permanent member and possesses veto power. This situation highlights an important structural limitation of the United Nations: a permanent member accused of violating international peace can block substantive Security Council action against itself. The General Assembly can express the position of the international community, but its recommendations do not have the same enforcement authority as Security Council decisions under Chapter VII.

Major lessons: The veto can prevent effective Security Council action.

> International condemnation does not automatically stop military aggression. The United Nations has limited ability to enforce its decisions against powerful states. Diplomatic negotiations remain difficult when the parties have fundamentally different security and territorial objectives. The Russia-Ukraine conflict illustrates the continuing relevance of the UN's institutional weaknesses in the twenty-first century.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS: HAS THE UNO COMPLETELY FAILED?

Although the United Nations has failed to prevent or stop several major wars, it would be incorrect to conclude that the organization has been completely unsuccessful.

The UN has played an important role in several peacekeeping and conflict-resolution efforts. For example, its peacekeeping missions have contributed to ceasefire monitoring, civilian protection, election supervision, and post-conflict reconstruction in various countries. Fortna (2008), through systematic research on civil wars, demonstrates that international peacekeeping can improve the prospects of maintaining peace after armed conflicts. The United Nations has also contributed to humanitarian assistance, refugee protection, international law, and the promotion of human rights. Furthermore, the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect principle in the 2005 World Summit Outcome recognized that states have a responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (United Nations General Assembly, 2005). Therefore, the main problem is not the complete absence of achievements but the gap between the organization's international responsibilities and its practical ability to implement them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Several reforms are necessary to strengthen the role of the United Nations in preventing and stopping wars.

Reform of the Security Council The structure of the Security Council should be made more representative of contemporary international realities. Greater representation of developing countries and underrepresented regions should be considered.

Reform of Veto Power The use of veto power should be restricted in situations involving genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Permanent members should exercise greater responsibility when international peace is threatened.

Strengthening Peacekeeping Operations Peacekeeping missions should receive sufficient financial resources, modern equipment, trained personnel, and clear mandates to protect civilians effectively.

Improving Early-Warning Mechanisms The United Nations should strengthen its ability to identify potential conflicts and respond before violence becomes widespread.

Promoting International Cooperation Member states should prioritize collective security over narrow political and economic interests. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations should also be strengthened.

Strengthening Diplomatic Measures The organization should invest more in mediation, negotiation, preventive diplomacy, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Ensuring Accountability Countries and armed groups responsible for serious violations of international law should face appropriate international accountability mechanisms.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The research identifies the following major findings:

1. The veto power of permanent Security Council members is one of the most important institutional obstacles to effective international action.
2. Political and economic interests of powerful countries frequently influence decisions regarding international conflicts.
3. The United Nations lacks an independent military force and depends on the voluntary contributions of member states.
4. The principle of state sovereignty sometimes complicates international intervention in serious humanitarian crises.
5. Weak mandates and insufficient resources have reduced the effectiveness of some peacekeeping missions.
6. The United Nations has nevertheless achieved important results in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and international diplomacy.
7. Institutional reforms and greater cooperation among member states are necessary to improve the organization's effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations Organization was established with the vision of preventing future wars and maintaining international peace and security. However, the continuation of major conflicts across the world demonstrates that the organization has not been able to fulfil all its objectives. The Rwandan Genocide, the Srebrenica massacre, the Iraq War, and the Syrian Civil War highlight important institutional and political weaknesses within the international security system.The Security Council veto, competing national interests, lack of independent military power, and limitations of peacekeeping operations have significantly affected the ability of the United Nations to stop wars. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to describe the UNO as a completely failed organization. Its contributions to international diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and the development of international law remain important. The real challenge is to transform the United Nations into a more democratic, representative, accountable, and effective international institution. Ultimately, the success of the United Nations does not depend only on institutional reforms. It also depends on the political will of its member states to prioritize international peace over narrow national interests. Without genuine cooperation among powerful and developing countries, the goal of achieving a peaceful world will remain difficult to realize.

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