

Successes and Failures of United Nations

Abstract

U.N.O. has helped to end numerous conflicts, often through actions of the Security Council, the organ primarily responsible under the U.N. Charter for the maintenance of International peace and security. U.N.O. was established after World War II with a motto to maintain world peace. But after more than seven decades of its existence, now question arises is U.N.O. really successful in solving International problems? But U.N.O. have been failed in different missions also. The most important area is now to assess the success and failures of U.N. since its establishment.

Keywords: Security Council, Soviet Union, Korean Crisis, Civil War, Peacekeeping Operations, Somalia, Humanitarian Programmes.

Introduction

From the earliest stages of World War II people everywhere assumed that some kind of world organisation would be established after the final victory of allied powers. The United Nations grew out of the alliance of the nations throughout the world against Nazi Germany in World War II.

In the summer of 1941, a meeting between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill resulted in the phrasing of the Atlantic charter. A set of principles for world peace and cooperation among nations. Two years later (in Oct, 1943) the leaders again conferred. This time with the Joseph Stalin (Premier of Soviet Union) in Tehran (Iran) and agreed on the need for an effective instrument for maintaining international peace. In 1945 representatives of more than 50 countries met in San Fransisco (U.S.A.) to phrase the basic charter for a world organisation on 24 Oct, 1945 and U.N.O. formally came into existence when 54 countries signed and these 54 countries are also known as the original members of U.N.O.. There are currently 193 members of U.N.O. and U.N.O. prominent specialised agencies include WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO are also contributing in different fields.

One of the primary purpose of U.N. is to maintain international peace and security over the decades. U.N.O. is successful in maintaining International peace and security. But alongwith this U.N.O. have failed in different missions also.

Aim of the Study

The main aim of this paper is to focus on the functioning of United nations, its organs and agencies. This paper examines the successes and failures of the United Nations in the last seven decades of its existence and how U.N. is being controlled by big powers of this world.

Objective

The main objective of the United Nations is to prevent war and conflicts. The Department of Political Affairs play a central role. In the eradication of poverty and development of human rights and rule of law is also the main objective of U.N.O.

U.N.O. Outline the following Peace Keeping Activities

1. Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Landmine removal and associated activities.
2. Human Rights protection and promotion.
3. Rule of Law related activities.
4. Support for the restoration of State authority.
5. Electoral assistance.
6. Promotion of social and economic recovery development.

U.N. generally follows the three principles for deploying peacekeepers:

1. Main parties to the conflict must consented.
2. Peacekeepers should remain impartial but not neutral.



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3. Peacekeepers cannot use force except in self-defence and defence of mandate.

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) provides political and executive directions to U.N. peacekeeping operations and maintains contact with the Security Council.

In 2007 DPKO was split up with the establishment of the Department of Field Support (DFS), which provides dedicated support and guidance to peacekeeping and political field missions in the area of finance and budget, Logistics, information, communication and technology.

History

In U.N. system there are five veto powers or five permanent members of Security Council. The so called Victors of World War II. The Old boys Club of 1945. These five permanent members made the organisation primarily serve their best interests rather than its mandate.

Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt were the authors of U.N. Charter and all they were in favour of control over this organisation through veto powers. But all we are familiar with the human rights record of Stalin and his deadly cleansing practice.

U.S. President Obama who wants to work with the United Nations and be a player rather than to dominate and control, this is the outside of the U.S. policy and the other side is very dangerous when U.S.A. expands the war in Afghanistan uses Bagram airbase prison full of tortured and uncharged refuses to end the occupation of Okinawa (Japanese Naval base in the control of U.S.A. since World War II) and America itself has a deplorable record.

U.N. and Peacekeeping Operations

The first peacekeeping mission was established in 1948, when the security council authorised the deployment of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) to the middle east to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Since then there have been more than 70 U.N. Peacekeeping operations around the world. Since U.N. Peacekeeping operations started in 1948. There have been approximate 70 peacekeeping missions over the last seven decades. Some were successful and other has been clouded by allegations of sex abuse, rape and human trafficking.

The first two peacekeeping operations deployed by the U.N. were the U.N. Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) and the U.N. Military Observer Group (UNMOGIP). Both of these missions which continue operating to this day. New Zealand first proposed taking part in a peace keeping mission in 1951 together with Australia and it offered troops as part of a commonwealth force to help resolve conflict between newly Independent India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region although offer was not taken up. The other armed peace keeping operation was the first U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF) deployed successfully in 1956 to address the Suez crisis. The U.N. Operation in the Congo (U.N.O.C) launched in 1960, was the first large scale mission having nearly 20,000 military personnel at its peak.

In 1988 U.N. Peacekeepers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At that time, the Nobel Committee cited

"The peace keeping forces through their efforts have made important contributions towards the realisation of one of the fundamental tenets of the United Nations".

More than one hundred thousand peacekeepers were deployed in Africa in early 2015. Peacekeepers are deployed to Somalia, the Western Sudanese region of Darfur, South Sudan and Mali and in these countries rebellions have claimed civilian lives and threatened to destabilise surrounding regions. In May, 2015 there were nine U.N. peacekeeping missions in Africa in which 80,000 peacekeepers were deployed in Africa.

Effectiveness of Peace Operations

Peacekeeping operations have had mixed results. In Africa operations in Liberia, Siera Leone and Ivory Coast were successful. Whereas latest missions in Sudan Darfur and Mali could not improve stability. These operations could not protect many civilians and left worst consequences of civil war.

A 2014 Human Rights Watch report claims that U.N. peacekeeping forces failed to prevent an attack in the DRC that left at least 30 civilians dead.

U.N.O. and Security Council

In United Nations the Security Council has responsibility for maintaining International peace and security. But during Cold War era both USSR and USA undermined the Security Councils ability to use its power.

Security Council deploys UN peacekeeping operations to help in reducing tension in troubled areas. The council may decide on enforcement measures, economic sanctions or collective military action.

It is clearly mentioned in the Resolution No. 377(V) of Nov, 1950 that General Assembly may take action if the Security Council fails to act. In case where there is threat or breach of peace or act of aggression. The General Assembly can consider the matter immediately with a view to making recommendations to members for collective measures to maintain International peace and security.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh send the most troops to U.N. peacekeeping missions which the USA, Japan and France are the top funders. Wealthy nations spend the most on peacekeeping but send less troops. Both India and Brazil are sending more troops in UN peacekeeping missions as both are interested to become permanent members of UN Security Council.

The Security Council is authorised to the use of military force for peacekeeping operations and UN peacekeeping operations were held in Palestine (1948), North Korea (1950), Congo (1960), Lebanon (1978), Iraq (1991) and Herzegovina (1995).

Successes of U.N.O.

The first and the foremost is it has prevented future world wars and is also instrumental in the maintenance of balance of power. U.N. acted as a vanguard for the protection of human rights and for this purpose U.N. Declaration on Human Rights was signed in 1948.

In the atomic field U.N. played an important role in disarming the world and making it nuclear free. NPT (Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty) and PTBT (Partial Test Ban Treaty) have been signed under U.N.O. Peacekeeping Operations and peaceful solution of disputes and refugees concern had always been on the list of core issues of U.N.O.

In world history number of countries committed to end of Nuclear Weapons Research Programme. South Africa decided to give up weapons just after the end of Apartheid in South Africa. In the 20th century when more than 70 million people were died from famine. But FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), a U.N.O. sponsored agency launched World Food Programme. Other agencies of U.N.O. like WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF played important role in International Social Sector.

In 1962, U.N. Secretary General U. Thant provided valuable assistance and took a great deal of time, energy and initiative as the primary negotiator between Nikita Khrushchev and John. F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile crisis, thus providing a critical link in the prevention of a nuclear warfare at that time.¹

The experience of United Nations in maintaining international peace and security cannot be viewed with complete satisfaction. This type of imperfection raises a number of questions regarding the effectiveness of United Nations System for maintaining international peace and security.

Failures of U.N.O.

The members of United Nations are failed to cooperate together in the time of crisis. On important issues major powers are failed to reach on consensus on important issues. There are number of occasions when U.N.O. became helpless like:

1. Israel had been taking unilateral actions against Palestinians for decades.
2. Failed to democratic aspirations of the world.
3. U.N.O. could not play an important role in Cuban Missile crisis and Vietnam crisis.
4. U.S. Invasion on Iraq in the name for the search of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction).
5. Soviet Union ignored U.N. opinion on Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
6. NATO dropped bombs over Yugoslavia.
7. U.N. peacekeepers were accused of paying women and young girls they were supposed to be protecting, sex and sometimes raping them in the Democratic Republic of Congo in early 2005. Similar allegations were found in Cambodia and Bosnia.
8. Anarchy in Iraq and Afghanistan.
9. It failed to generate universal consensus to protect the world climate even at Copenhagen.

Other critics and even proponents of the United Nations questions its effectiveness and relevance because in most high profile cases, there are essentially no consequences for violating a security council resolution. An early example of this was the Bangladesh Liberation War and the 1971 Bangladesh genocide committed by the Pakistani Army on Bengali Hindus. Critics of U.N. argued that the U.N. was completely ineffective in preventing the genocide.²

As part of Soviet Union, Russia also vetoed a U.N. Resolution condemning the USSR's shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007 in 1983. The veto has been singled out as a threat to human rights, with Amnesty International claiming that the five permanent members had used their veto to "promote their political self interest above the interest of protecting civilians". As of 2014, Amnesty International has suggested that a solution would involve the five permanent members surrendering their veto on issues of genocide.³

Jeane Kirkpatrick, who was appointed by Ronald Reagan (Late American President) as U.S. Ambassador to United Nations wrote in 1983 in the 'New York Times' that the process of discussions at the Security Council "More closely resembles a mugging of the United States that can either a political debate or an effort at problem solving".

In 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait then Baghdad was ready to negotiate a peace retreat. But Capitalist (America) greed for Iraqi Oil and opportunity for war and strategic importance of this region initiated war (Gulf War) on Iraq. After the American policies Iraq is still in the grip of terrorism, atrocities. Even when Saddam Hussain was Iraqi President such types of problems were not there.

About Iraqi situation Danis Halliday, who was Assistant General Secretary and Head of Humanitarian Programme in Iraq, he said,

"I lived and worked for the U.N. in Baghdad under U.N. sanctions in 1997-98 and it was a safe city today following massive bombing, occupation and a puppet govt, assassination and ethnic cleansing is a dirty even and some 1,00,000 American mercenaries run wild-killings outside of both domestic or international law. Has the Council spoken.....no"

He further says "Where is the U.N. International Criminal Court?"

Danis Halliday says, the country of Iraq has been destroyed as in Fallujah that I mentioned already... in terms of culture, social economic and infrastructural integrity and well being, what more can I say? The council kept quiet. In Gaza we have witnesses similar total destruction. Again the U.N. Security Council has failed to halt violence.

By the Oil for Food Programme, Iraq could gain relief from international sanctions by selling oil through U.N.O. But large sums of money were channelled into private pockets through this programme. It was regarding as the worst Financial Scandal in the U.N. History.

United Nations started "Assistance Mission" for Rawanda in 1994 but its peacekeepers failed to stop the majority of Hutus going on a murderous rampage and almost a million members of the Tutsi minority were killed. An enquiry in 1999 found that the U.N. ignored evidence that the genocide was planned and had refused to take action once it started.

The massacre of more than 8000 Muslim men at the hands of Serb forces in Srebrenica in 1995 was an even more specific failure for United Nations than any other failures.

Genome testing showed that most likely source of world's worst outbreak of cholera was

Nepali Peacekeeping Force. More than 7,00,000 people were infected and 8000 died.

When we talk about failures of United Nations then we find the 26 years old war in Sri Lanka, which left 1,00,000 people dead, is an equally dark spot in U.N. history. A highly critical U.N. Internal report of 2012 stated that the organisation was failed to protect the country's civilians to the last months of its bloody war. U.N. Security Council and the Human Rights Council both failed significantly "At every level" in preventing the death of thousands of people in the last 5 months of war.

A review of U.N. action during the final months of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009, in which tens of thousands of people were killed criticised the U.N. leadership, United Nations Security Council and top U.N. officials in Sri Lanka. U.N. staff were afraid to publicise widespread killings, top U.N. leaders did not intervene and the 15 member security council did not give "clear" order to protect civilians, said the U.N. report.

In Sudanese nation of Darfur in 2003 various militias attacked the govt. and the rebels defeated the Sudanese military populated villages were attacked and many civilians were murdered. But U.N. as it always does, condemned the actions only deployed troops three years later. A former U.N. Worker Aioha el Basri, told media about a "Conspiracy of Silence" when she resigned from the organisation. She watched on as militants shoot civilians right in front of them.

Former first Lady of Mozambique Graca Machel said that "In 6 out of 12 country studies on sexual exploitation of children in situations of Armed conflict prepared for the present report, the arrival of peacekeeping troops has been associated with a rapid rise in child prostitution".

In United Nations the issues related to the state of Israel, Palestinians and the other aspects of the Arab Israel conflict occupy a large amount of debate time. The U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has accused the United Nation Human Rights Council for focussing disproportionately on allegations of abuses by Israel.⁴ Four senior members of United Nations and two aid workers told the Guardian Newspaper that U.N. was fuelling to respond to the Syrian crisis in very much the same way it failed handling the final stages of the Sri Lankan crisis.

"The most unfair and inequitable law of the world which enables a powerful and authoritative minority to determine the fate of an indispensable and subjugated majority"⁵

The present scenario is not very comfortable of the developing world. Since they hardly have any effective say in the Security Council. So there is emerging a strong demand for democratisation of the Council which simply means making it more representative in nature.

A former Ambassador to United Nations Dore Gold published a book called "Tower of Babble". How the United Nations has fuelled global chaos. In this book, Dole Gold criticised United Nations and the functioning of United Nations.

United Nations General Assembly decided to hold a moment of silence in honour of North Korean

Dictator Kim Jong - following his death in 2011. Western diplomats criticised the decision.

"An officials at the Czech Republic's U.N. Mission said the Czechs did not request a similar moment of silence for Vaclav Havel, the playwright turned dissident who died a day after Kim."⁶

There has been criticism that five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, U.K. and the United States) who are all nuclear powers, have created an exclusive nuclear club whose powers are unchecked. Unlike the General Assembly, the United Nations Security Council does not have true international representation. This has led to accusations that the UNSC only addresses the strategic interests and political motives of the permanent members especially in humanitarian interventions. For example protecting the oil-rich Kuwaits in 1991 but poorly protecting resource poor Rwandans in 1997.⁷

A veto from any of the permanent members can halt any possible action the Council may take. One country's objection, rather than the opinions of a majority of countries, may cripple any possible U.N. armed or diplomatic response to a crisis. For instance, John Mearsheimer claimed that "Since 1982, the U.S. has vetoed 32 Security Council resolutions critical of Israel. more than the total number of vetoes cast by all the other security council members."⁸

Conclusion

The U.N.O.'s successes in peacekeeping activities cannot be ignored. But in the contemporary era the danger of one country (USA) or one block (NATO) dictating UN's agenda needs to be seriously debated.

On the other side U.N. is failed in number of occasions. In spite of failure U.N. is the only organisation in the world and it is one of the most hopeful factors on the world horizon. In many cases U.N. Security Council is dealing with the issues of individual country rather than global issues which are concerned with peace and security. Some critics are of the opinion that when we look the failures of U.N.O. in the last seven decades. Of course mandate and credibility of U.N.O. is in danger.

Now Geo political power has already moved away from the UN Security Council to the G-8 and now they have seen the G-20 enhance that Geo-political power and further diminish the role of the Council.

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