



ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN MAINTAINING PEACE AND SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

This document analyses the critical function of the United Nations (UN) in promoting global peace and security, a responsibility established in 1945 after World War II. Key Mechanisms: It discusses the unique roles of key UN entities, underscoring the Security Council's binding authority and its mechanisms for peacekeeping and sanctions, the normative and deliberative role of the General Assembly, and the diplomatic mediation powers granted to the Secretary-General under Article 99. Additionally, the document highlights the UN's comprehensive strategy for stability through post-conflict peacebuilding, disarmament initiatives (including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), and the implementation of international humanitarian and human rights laws. Challenges & Significance: Although the UN encounters ongoing challenges, such as political divisions and veto stalemates within the Security Council. It remains an indispensable hub for international cooperation, conflict resolution, and global crisis management.

Keywords: General Assembly, Security Council, International Humanitarian and Human Rights, World War.

INTRODUCTION

One of the primary goals of the United Nations (UN) is to maintain global peace and security. After the tragic effects of World War II, the organisation was founded in 1945 with the intention of averting future conflicts and fostering international cooperation. An important turning point in the evolution of international law and international governance was the establishment of the United Nations.

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The UN gives nations a place to argue over disagreements, cooperate on international issues and help generate collective solutions for problems. Through its various organs and processes, the organisation seeks to resolve conflicts, prevent wars and promote world peace.¹ While the peace and security mandate of the United Nations has been praised for its power, it has also faced criticism; nevertheless, its role in today's world order remains essential.² Among them, Article 1 of the UN Charter lays out the purpose of the organisation. Preserving global security and peace becomes the ultimate purpose. It aims to achieve this by discouraging aggression and promptly undertaking effective collective action to eliminate threats to peace.

Another goal of the UN is to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. The UN also promotes international cooperation in the settlement of humanitarian, social, cultural, and economic issues. The organisation also acts as a hub for coordinating international efforts to accomplish these shared objectives.³

ROLE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The United Nations Security Council is the main organ that maintains international peace and security. Of its fifteen members, five are permanent: the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China. The five permanent members can veto any serious resolution.

The Security Council takes several actions to address threats to peace. These measures range from authorisation for peacekeeping operations, the imposition of economic sanctions or other punitive action and, in extreme cases, authorisation for armed intervention. By promoting talks, mediation, and diplomatic solutions, the Council plays a crucial part in settling international disputes.⁴ The Security Council has frequently been criticised despite its significance because the veto power occasionally hinders effective action. When members who are permanent disagree, it becomes difficult for the Council to respond quickly to crises.⁵ The UN is one of the most visible players in maintaining security and peace through its peacekeeping missions. UN peacekeeping troops are deployed in conflict zones to enforce ceasefires, protect civilians, and support political processes designed to achieve lasting peace.

¹ United Nations, "History of the United Nations," Official UN Website.

² UN Charter, art 99.

³ Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Article 1 – Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

⁴ Malcolm N. Shaw, *International Law*, 8th Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 1120.

⁵ Malcolm N Shaw, *International Law* (8th edn, Cambridge University Press 2017) 1120.

Peacekeeping forces consist of soldiers, police and civilian personnel contributed by member states. These forces operate under the auspices of the United Nations and follow strict rules that prioritise impartiality, consent from parties to a conflict and prudent use of force. Since 1948, the UN has conducted several peacekeeping operations around the world. These missions have helped to rebuild institutions in post-conflict communities and stabilise war-torn areas.⁶ However, peacekeeping missions must address difficulties such as limited resources, complex conflicts, and political differences among member governments. The United Nations prioritises peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping. Costly and destructive conflicts can be avoided by implementing diplomatic tactics to resolve issues before violence arises. The Secretary-General frequently plays a major role in negotiating and mediating between opposing parties.⁷

Peacebuilding aims to reconstruct societies after conflicts and assist in economic cooperation and political institution-building. These steps also reduce the risk of further violence and lay the groundwork for conditions to support long-term stability. To assist nations emerging from violence, the UN Peacebuilding Commission collaborates with several specialised entities.

International peace and security have also been upheld as well by the United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly offers a forum for discussion and group decision-making even if it lacks the Security Council's binding authority.⁸

Global challenges like disarmament, terrorism, and humanitarian disasters are addressed by the General Assembly through discussions, resolutions, and international cooperation. Additionally, it is crucial in establishing international standards and fostering amicable international relations.⁹

CHALLENGES FACED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

UN has a number of difficulties in upholding peace and security despite its significant role. The political split among the major nations, especially in the Security Council, is one of the primary obstacles. During emergencies, the veto power can occasionally block collective action.

⁶ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Official Website, available at: <https://www.un.org/peacekeeping>

⁷ Charter of the United Nations, Article 99 – Powers of the Secretary-General.

⁸ United Nations Charter (adopted 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 October 1945) art 1.

⁹ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, 7th Edition, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 695.

The changing character of confrontations presents another difficulty. Modern disputes are more difficult to resolve because they frequently occur within states rather than between them. Concerns including cyberthreats, terrorism, and security risks related to climate change provide new difficulties for the world community.¹⁰

Additionally, inadequate funding, logistical difficulties, and a lack of cooperation from contending parties are typical issues for peacekeeping missions. These challenges may reduce the effectiveness of UN efforts to maintain peace. Despite these limitations, the United Nations has made major contributions to world peace and security. It has played a critical role in resolving disputes in a variety of sectors and preventing wars through diplomatic talks.¹¹

UN peacekeeping operations have helped to put an end to conflicts, supervise elections, and protect civilians. In addition, the organisation has influenced human rights standards, international law, and disarmament treaties.¹² These accomplishments highlight the need for international collaboration in resolving global concerns.

ROLE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL IN MAINTAINING PEACE

One of the important functions of the UN Secretary-General is to maintain global peace and security. The Secretary-General regularly mediates international disputes in his role as the UN's highest administrative officer.) The Secretary-General employs diplomatic initiatives, dialogue and negotiation with a view to bringing the parties in dispute to a peaceful settlement of their differences.¹³

The Secretary-General also calls the attention of the Security Council to important international developments. Article 99 of the UN Charter empowers the Secretary-General to bring any matter that might threaten international peace and security to the attention of the Security Council. The UN leadership can act early to prevent hostilities because of its responsibility.¹⁴

By supporting the creation and application of international law, the UN also advances peace. The UN contributes to the development of legal frameworks that govern state conduct through

¹⁰ Charter of the United Nations, – Powers of the Secretary-General.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, 7th Edition, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 694.

¹³ Ibid 695.

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly, "Maintenance of International Peace and Security", UN Documentation

international treaties, conventions, and agreements. These legal measures deter aggressiveness and encourage amicable relations.¹⁵

Disarmament is another crucial factor. The United Nations aggressively advocates for the reduction and control of weapons, particularly WMDs like nuclear weapons. The UN seeks to lower worldwide military tensions and restrict the spread of dangerous weapons through a number of international accords and negotiations.¹⁶

Disarmament refers to the reduction or elimination of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, chemical, and biological arms. Efforts like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) aim to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and encourage their gradual elimination. Disarmament reduces the chances of war, minimises human suffering, and promotes trust among nations.¹⁷

ROLE IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Most importantly, and the reason we're all probably here, is that by alleviating humanitarian suffering and standing up for human rights, the U.N. supports peace and security. In many crisis regions, the UN provides food, medical care, shelter and protection to civilians affected by war.

In conflict zones, groups like the UN and other humanitarian initiatives work to mitigate suffering and support eventual recovery. Through promoting equality, justice and human rights, the UN helps build stable societies that are less prone to war. Therefore, the dignity of humans will be essential to maintain.¹⁸

Protection of Humans: International humanitarian law (IHL), including the Geneva Conventions, protects civilians, prisoners of war, and wounded soldiers. It prohibits acts like torture, inhuman treatment, and targeting of non-combatants. It also ensures respect for basic human rights even during armed conflicts. Additionally, international human rights law holds states accountable for violations and promotes justice through courts and tribunals.¹⁹

¹⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Adopted 10 December 1948) UNGA Res 217 A(III).

¹⁶ NPT (n 15) art VI.

¹⁷ United Nations Disarmament Office, "Global Disarmament Efforts", United Nations Publications.

¹⁸ United Nations General Assembly, "Maintenance of International Peace and Security", UN Documentation.

¹⁹ United Nations Charter, Preamble – Commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

CONCLUSION

An essential part of preserving world peace and security is the United Nations. The organisation strives to handle crises, avert wars, and advance long-term stability through its institutions, including the Security Council, General Assembly, and peacekeeping deployments. The UN continues to be one of the most significant venues for international collaboration despite a number of obstacles, such as political disputes and changing security risks. To create a world that is safe and peaceful, the United Nations must be made more effective, and member states must work together more. Moreover, the organisation strengthens international law by promoting adherence to treaties and conventions, ensuring accountability for violations, and encouraging cooperation among states. Its role in disarmament efforts, including initiatives like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, further contributes to reducing global threats. The UN also provides humanitarian assistance during crises, safeguarding human rights and supporting vulnerable populations.

The United Nations serves as a crucial foundation for maintaining global peace, stability, and security. Through its various interconnected institutions, including the Security Council, General Assembly, peacekeeping operations, and specialised humanitarian agencies, the organisation actively strives to reduce violence, address global crises, and promote long-lasting societal recovery. In addition to immediate conflict resolution, the UN supports a rules-based international framework by bolstering legal structures, advocating for the disarmament of nuclear weapons, and safeguarding human rights, even in the midst of armed conflict. Although systemic issues such as geopolitical rifts, gridlock caused by veto powers, and the emergence of new security challenges sometimes hinder its responsiveness, the UN's historical role in preventing large-scale wars emphasises its crucial importance. Ultimately, improving global security and peace necessitates enhancing the operational efficiency of the United Nations and nurturing deeper cooperation.