

Global Governance in Retreat: Assessing the United Nations Organization's Inability to Manage Modern Geopolitical Conflicts.

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Abstract

The retreat of global governance is increasingly visible in the limited effectiveness of the United Nations in managing contemporary geopolitical conflicts. UN Conceived in the aftermath of World War II as a guarantor of collective security, today faces growing constraints due to great power rivalries and persistent deadlock within the United Nations Security Council. Ongoing conflicts such as the Russia–Ukraine War and the Israel– Hamas War, along with tensions involving Iran and the United States, reveal a pattern of selective enforcement that encourages legal relativism. As states increasingly rely on regional and bilateral mechanisms, global responses appear fragmented, reflecting a deeper shift from rule-based multilateralism to power-driven international politics. A critical question therefore arises should only the Security Council to be blamed or does responsibility extends to the UN as a whole? It was believed P5 would be the World's Policemen, In Practice, however strategic rivalries, conflicting national interests, and frequent use of the Veto have often prevented the timely and collective action during major geopolitical crisis. As a result, the implementation of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter has become increasingly inconsistent. This situation raises an important question: Can Global Governance remain effective when the states entrusted with protecting the international order are themselves divided on fundamental issues of Peace and Security? Unless greater political commitment and institutional cooperation emerge, the credibility of the United Nations as the central pillar of Collective Security is likely to face growing challenges

Keywords Legal Relativism, Geopolitical Conflicts, P5 Policemen, Global Governance, United Nations Organization.

Introduction

The term governance has emerged from Latin word 'gubernator' which means "a person who is source of authority". So Global Governance is a regulatory mechanism which gives pattern to the behavior of actors involved at global level, Global Governance is an umbrella term which involves management, of the global affairs through formal, informal

mechanism of authority, which is meant to recognize the immediate or long-term goals of the member states by encouraging adherence to shared norms and it is expected from the member countries to behave as per the norms, guidelines and policies but in reality, World has no global authority. Global Governance empowers countries to participate and secure the interests which earlier becomes hurdle to their sovereignty. According to Delbrück, the UN has become a global actor with meaning role to play in the process of globalization stability it should serve as the forum of determination of international public interest, promote the participation of non-state actors and works to expand and reshape the international legal framework, but in practice a large gap exist in between theory and the application part of the theory sudden wars, long duration of wars, energy supply chain disruption and mismanagement, Crisis of Middle East inefficiency of the

UNSC to stop wars and to pitch for peace idea still remains the dark area of the brighter picture. Global governance today is facing several important challenges that limit its ability to deal with international problems effectively. One major issue is the jurisdictional gap, which exists because there is no central authority with the power to

enforce decisions across all countries. As a result, international organizations often struggle to take strong action on issues such as human rights, crime, unemployment, and global peace. Another key challenge is the incentive gap. Since global governance depends on the voluntary participation of countries, states usually act according to their own national interests. This creates inequality, especially between rich and poor nations, as developing countries often receive less attention and support due to their limited resources and influence. In addition, there is a participation gap within international institutions, where reaching agreement among countries becomes difficult. States often disagree on important matters, particularly when decisions may affect their sovereignty or economic interests, which leads to delays or inaction. Together, these challenges show that global governance is not as unified or effective as it ideally should be, making it harder to address global issues in a coordinated way. The primary role of United Nations in global governance is as a political forum for dialogue concerning the major issues on the global economic agenda or as a mediator to negotiate and as an integrator of the different perspective on the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development but here question arises either whole organization to be blamed for the retreat of the United Nations Organization's or any single organ of the UNO.

1 United Nations Structure and Limitations.

Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of the peace and security. All member states of the Security Council are obligated to follow decisions made by the council. In some cases council has the powers vested to impose sanctions or to punish the members or other bodies for destabilizing peace and security. Security Council is made up of 15 members out of which 5 member P5 are permanent members and rest 10 are non permanent members elected for two year terms. China, Russia, USA, France, United Kingdom are the council's permanent members. The United Nations (UN) plays a central role in maintaining international peace and security through a range of institutional mechanisms and diplomatic efforts. One of its primary approaches is preventive diplomacy and mediation, whereby the UN engages in early intervention to de-escalate tensions and prevent conflicts from intensifying. In situations where conflict has already erupted, the UN undertakes peacekeeping operations aimed at stabilizing regions, protecting civilians, facilitating political dialogue, and supporting disarmament processes. Complementing these efforts are peace building initiatives, which focus on assisting post-conflict societies in rebuilding institutions and ensuring long-term stability. Additionally, the UN contributes to counter-terrorism through the development of multiple international legal instruments designed to combat global terrorism. At the institutional level, the General Assembly deliberates on key issues of peace and security, offering recommendations through resolutions, while the Security Council possesses the authority to implement enforcement measures, including economic sanctions and military interventions, to restore international peace.

Despite these mechanisms, the effectiveness of the UN in securing ceasefires in violent conflicts remains limited. A major constraint arises from deep disagreements among major powers, particularly within the Security Council, where competing geopolitical interests often hinder consensus and decisive action. The post-Cold War unipolar order further weakened the UN's role, as the absence of a counterbalancing power allowed dominant states, especially the United States and its allies, to act unilaterally, often bypassing UN authorization. The veto power held by the five permanent members of the Security Council also poses a structural challenge, as conflicting national interests frequently result in policy paralysis. Moreover, the notion of a liberal international order has been contested, with instances such as military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq highlighting the limitations of UN authority and the selective adherence of powerful states to international norms.

The lack of diplomatic willingness to control violence in specific conflicts can also be attributed to domestic and regional political dynamics. In the case of Israel, internal political tensions, including widespread protests over judicial reforms, may influence the continuation of conflict for strategic or political purposes. Furthermore, there appears to be limited support for the Palestinian cause among certain Arab states, including those in the Gulf region, as well as in countries like Egypt and Jordan, thereby reducing collective regional pressure for De-escalation. Simultaneously, domestic political considerations in the United States, particularly during election cycles, can constrain its diplomatic engagement, while initiatives such as the Abraham Accords have experienced stagnation. Together, these factors underscore the complex interplay between international institutional limitations and domestic political realities in shaping the prospects for peace.

2 Comparative Analysis of the United Nation's Response to Contemporary Geopolitical Conflicts.

The effectiveness of the United Nations cannot be adequately assessed by examining the individual conflicts in isolation. Although the UN continues to serve as the principal institution responsible for maintaining international peace and security, its performance has varied considerably across contemporary conflicts. The Russia-Ukraine conflict illustrates the limitations of the Security Council when one Permanent member is directly involved in the

conflict. As Russia holds veto power, several proposed resolutions faced institutional decisive action. Consequently, diplomatic efforts shifted towards the General Assembly, Regional Organizations and Bilateral initiatives. This cause demonstrates us how the concentration of decision-making authority within the permanent membership can constrain collective security during great power conflicts. A different pattern emerges in the Israel-Hamas conflict. Here the United Nations remained actively engaged in humanitarian assistance, ceasefire negotiations and diplomatic discussions. However division among the P5 members over the interpretation of the Self Defence and Humanitarian Obligation prevented the Security Council from developing a unified response. Unlike the Russia-Ukraine conflict, where the primary obstacle was the direct involvement of the permanent member, the Israel-Hamas conflict reflects how competing political narratives and strategic alliances can cause prolonged Institutional Paralysis. The Situation in Sudan presents the another dimension of institutional limitation. Although no Permanent member is directly engaged as the belligerent, the international response has remained comparatively limited because the conflict has attracted less strategic attention from the major powers. This suggest us that the effectiveness of the Global Governance and United Nations is influenced not only by institutional procedures but also by the political priorities of influential states. Humanitarian Concerns alone are often insufficient to generate sustained International Action. The South China Sea dispute differs from the previous cases because it represents a prolonged strategic competition rather than an active war. The dispute demonstrate that when issues involve territorial sovereignty and major power competition the organization's influence is primarily normative rather than enforcement-oriented. Viewed together these cases reveal a common pattern. The United Nations performs better, effectively in providing humanitarian assistance, facilitating dialogue, and promoting International Norms, yet its capacity to prevent or resolve conflicts declines significantly when geopolitical rivalries, Veto Politics and competing strategic interests dominates decision making.

United Nations Organization's failed to resolve the unresolved wars and disputes till date because of which a lot of people suffered and still suffering either directly or indirectly mostly from the P5 veto the resolution in the security Council and mostly number of great powers don't show any interest in issues, of prime importance. Number of wars and conflicts increased after the creation of UNO and millions suffer some died some displaced because of the war, and the number of WMP, weapons of mass destruction increased in the post UN world, and even the long unresolved issues add last nail to the coffin ie the lack of interest of P5 member in seriousness towards developing countries which are suffering due to wars. Though the intensity of the escalation or wars conflicts are low as compared to world war 1 and world war 2 but still any form of violence is threat towards the world peace, Sometimes some scholars quote United Nations Organization as the playground in which only privileged one plays when it comes decision making and the allocation of the finances P5 always plays pivotal role and the interest of the others are compromised which gives rise to the Legal Relativism, United Nations derive its idea from universal legal norms via documents like Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however other members excluding P5 argue that different states may interpret rights and laws according to their own politics or culture so states used this term legal relativism to justify and protect their internal actions by quoting "Our laws and values are different" if UNO will solve this dilemma Global Governance will reemerge in a way which will empower UNO to function fully, Dilemma ie to be addressed is "One state calls an intervention illegal aggression" "Another state calls it humanitarian responsibility" In effectiveness of the Security Council or UNO to deal with this dilemma lead to the retreat of the Global Governance. The persistence of legal relativism among sovereign states erodes the normative authority of the United Nations transforming global governance into a fragmented system where enforcement depends more on political will than on legal Obligation.

3 Theoretical Framework: In this study researcher has used the Eclectic Approach to analyze the retreat of the Global Governance. As it is known fact that complexities of today's International Environment cannot be adequately understood by using only through single theoretical perspective because as we all know the Global Governance is influenced by power politics, Institutional Norms and rapidly evolving security challenges, even one Naval blockade sometimes changes the course of the war as we have seen in recent US and Iran conflict. Therefore research integrates insights from the Realism, Liberal Institutionalism, and Constructivism analytical framework. The Realistic perspective will help us to understand and explain why major powers often place National Interest above collective International Commitments anchored by the United Nations Charter and UNO. Threat of the Veto by P5 members of United Nations Security Council, strategic Competition among the great powers and most importantly the selective implementation of the International Law demonstrates that states behaviors revolves largely around the power considerations. On the other hand Liberal Institutionalism provides an important lens for understanding the continued relevance of the United Nations despite the shortcomings. The theory help us to understand International Institutions as the essential platforms for Dialogue, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management. However UN has encountered the significant obstacles in responding to recent conflict it remains the only organization with near-universal membership and recognized mandate to promote collective security. This perspective highlights both the achievement of the institution and the need for

the meaningful institutional reforms rather than its rejection. Constructivism complements the role of International Norms, Shared Values, Legitimacy, and collective identities in shaping state behaviour. State behaviors are not fixed, The Study argues that the growing practice of Legal Relativism, selective interpretation of International Law, and differing perceptions of humanitarian intervention have weakened confidence in the normative foundations of Global Governance. These developments have contributed to inconsistent International Responses to contemporary conflicts and have reduced the credibility of UN.

4 Changing Nature of Modern Conflicts.

Modern warfare is changing day by day with the introduction of the modern weapons techniques arrangements, edge cutting technological in war fields, nowadays scope of the warfare enters into new chapter in which from physical combat to economic, to psychological and digital combats have changed the direction of the conflicts. Earlier traditionally warfare used to be in defined rules of engagement mostly state centric conflicts, clear battle fields, uniform soldiers, but in present times modern warfare includes non military and indirect methods too involving Non State Actors, Use of Cyber warfare technology hacking mechanism and blurred boundaries between the war and peace all this is due to the globalization of the technological advancements. Which later also give rise to the Intra state Asymmetrical conflicts like Civil wars, Insurgency, Guerrilla warfare. Modern warfare heavily depends upon Satellite communication, Surveillance systems, Real time intelligence which eventually lead to the precision warfare strike capabilities and reduced the need for the large troops deployments. Drones, Autonomous weapons, precision guided missiles using live geo stat data's empower modern warfare to define new possibilities which are even fatal to the member states of UNO or for the efforts of the Global Governance. Hybrid warfare is the new trend in which it becomes difficult to differentiate the blur vision distinction between the war and peace, Military operations, Cyber Attacks, Psychological warfare, economic pressure, naval blockades, veto misuse are some of the components of the hybrid warfare. Cyber warfare involve targets the information system and networks hacking govt. sites, attacks on financial Institutions, Disruption of communication are some types of Cyber Attacks, Cyber warfare threatens the national security without any old Traditional military engagements its low cost with high degree of anonymity. On state actors also play major role in the changing nature of the modern warfare like terrorism use violence to create fear to achieve ideological motivation asymmetric tactics and civil targets which lead to international security threat and the ambit of the modern war is changing totally from conventional warfare to multi domain Operations, today these operations extend beyond land, Air, beyond Sea, Cyber etc. To address such issues United Nations Organization must rethink on how the reliance on member states for enforcement undermines its ability to ensure compliance with its resolutions.

5 Emerging Challenges and declining effectiveness of UN.

United nations organization is losing its credibility and effectiveness in modern times which eventually hampers the global efforts to make rule based global governance, UNO faces challenges in practicing preventive diplomacy to maintain peace and security in new world order As the words of Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon saying that preventive diplomacy is not the option but a necessity. So UN is mandated to use preventive diplomacy if it is used with prior to conflicts the chances of conflicts turning full scale wars will be low in numbers. As the UN's option of actions are restricted to peaceful means only by rules of international law of intervention especially with regard to the prohibition of force element. Principle of state sovereignty sometimes becomes hurdle for the UN in mitigating the issues in pre- conflict stages ie prior to conflicts. Preventive Diplomacy is based on the proverb prevention is better than cure it is less costly sometimes very effective tool to bridge gaps inconsistencies between the parties. It must be the goal of the UN to take the Pro Active steps rather than provocative stances to empower the global governance. But lack of the sufficient resources chronic lack of findings by members hinders the functioning of the preventive diplomacy and measures other restrain is the wide actors involved in the preventive diplomacy like ranging from Governmental to Non state actors. Another factor is UN don't have its own Peace Making Force its totally dependent upon the member States, and challenges like delays more dependency in troops deployment from few members add more problems which lead to delays and hampers the effectiveness of the peacekeeping missions.

6 Conclusion.

United Nations today exist in a state of tension between its historical legitimacy and its contemporary limitations. Whether it can transform itself into a more representative and effective mechanism of global governance or remain constrained by entrenched power Politics, will largely depend upon the willingness of the member states particularly those that benefit from the current structure -need for to embrace meaningful reform. A reformed UN would not only strengthen the prospects for global peace but also reaffirm the foundational vision of its charter: the establishment of an international order governed by the rule of law rather than the dominance of power. United

Nations can not be dismissed it remains the only global platform with near universal membership ,a central institution for articulating collective security obligations and unique normative authority in shaping international discourse, however its future will ultimately depend upon its capacity to evolve beyond the geopolitical constraints. United Nations is presently situated at a critical turning point. On the one hand its historical contributions ranging from successful peacekeeping interventions in Namibia, Combodia and El Salvador to its role in shaping global health governance through World Health Organization WHO and development of international legal norms via the International Court of Justice clearly demonstrates its enduring institutional relevance. However these achievements stand in sharp contrasts to its inability to effectively respond to major humanitarian and security crisis including the Rwandan Genocide , the Srebrenica Massacre ongoing conflict between USA and Iran ,Israel Hamas conflict, Russia Ukraine war ,these failure are not incidental rather they point towards deeper structural contradiction within the global governance system of UN. Like limited number of powerful states retain the ability to override collective global will...

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