



Assessing the political and military power of the UN

Committee: SPC1

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Introduction

The United Nations was founded in the aftermath of World War II with the aim of promoting international cooperation and maintaining peace and security. It is composed of 193 member states and has a wide range of responsibilities, including peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and the promotion of human rights and sustainable development. As part of its mandate, the UN has the authority to take collective action to maintain international peace and security, including the use of military force. In this sense, the UN has some degree of political and military power. However, the extent of this power and its effectiveness in achieving its goals is a topic of debate among scholars and policymakers.

One aspect of assessing the political power of the UN is examining its role in international relations and the extent to which it is able to influence the actions of member states. This includes looking at the UN's ability to negotiate and mediate conflicts, its role in promoting international law and human rights, and its effectiveness in addressing global challenges such as poverty, diseases, and climate change.

Overall, the political and military power of the UN can be seen as a complex and multifaceted issue, with both strengths and weaknesses. Understanding the UN's power and how it is used is important for evaluating its effectiveness as an international organization and for considering its role in addressing global challenges.

In this Research Report, we will examine the political and military power of the United Nations, focusing on its role in international relations and its ability to influence the behaviour of member states. We will also consider the challenges the UN faces in exercising its political and military power and the potential ways it could be strengthened.



Definition of Key Terms

Embargo

An embargo is a restriction on the movement of goods, services, or information between countries. They can be imposed by the UN as well as by governments. It is a form of economic or political sanction that is meant to limit or prevent trade or other relations with a specific country or group of countries. Embargoes may be imposed for a variety of reasons, such as to protect national, as well as international, security, to punish a country for engaging in certain activities that are deemed harmful or unacceptable, or to apply pressure on a country to change its policies or actions. Embargoes can have significant economic and political consequences for both the imposing country or organization and the targeted country and are often controversial.

UN Charter

The United Nations Charter is the foundational treaty of the UN. It was signed in June 1945 in San Francisco by the representatives of 50 countries and came into effect in October 1945, following its ratification by the five permanent members of the Security Council and a majority of the other signatories. The Charter sets out the purposes and principles of the UN and establishes the structure and functions of the UN, including the General Assembly (GA), the Security Council (SC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Secretariat.

One of the key purposes of the UN Charter is to maintain international peace and security by providing a forum for nations to peacefully resolve disputes and address threats to international peace and security. The Charter also promotes the protection of human rights and the promotion of economic and social development. It establishes the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to promote and protect human rights, and it establishes the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to promote economic and social cooperation.

Asset freeze

An asset freeze is a legal measure that prevents a person, organization, or country from accessing or using certain financial assets or property. They are often used as a form of economic sanctions, in which a government or international organization seeks to exert pressure on a particular entity by limiting its access to financial resources. Asset freezes are generally intended to limit the ability of an individual or organization to engage in certain activities, such as funding terrorism or engaging in fraudulent activity.



UNICEF

UNICEF is an organization devoted to helping and protecting children around the world. UNICEF stands for the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, which is an agency of the United Nations that provides humanitarian aid and assistance to children in need. This organization was created in 1946 in response to the suffering of children in Europe, who were affected by WWII. Since then, the mission and commitment of UNICEF has grown to encompass providing relief and protection to children in over 150 countries.

UNDP

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a significant organization in the global sphere that has the ambitious goal of helping create human development and reduce poverty, inequality, and injustice. UNDP's longstanding role as a major conference and aid organization has seen it involved in all corners of the world.

General Overview

In this passage of the Research Report, we will further examine and evaluate the various forms of political and military power the UN possesses.

Resolutions:

One source of political power for the UN is its ability to pass resolutions. Resolutions are formal statements adopted by the UN General Assembly or Security Council or any other forum of the UN that address issues of international concern. These resolutions have both political and military power and can be used to address a range of issues, including conflicts, human rights abuses, and international sanctions.

UN resolutions can be either non-binding or binding. Non-binding resolutions are recommendations or expressions of the UN's opinion, while binding resolutions are legally enforceable. The UN Security Council has the authority to adopt binding resolutions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows it to take measures to maintain or restore international peace and security. These measures can include imposing sanctions, authorizing the use of force, or establishing peacekeeping missions.

The UN General Assembly also has the power to pass resolutions, but these are typically non-binding. The General Assembly can adopt resolutions on a range of issues, including international cooperation, human rights, and development. While non-binding resolutions do not have the same legal force as binding resolutions, they can still carry significant political weight and serve as a means of exerting pressure on member states' actions.



In the political realm, UN resolutions serve as a means for member states to express their collective will on various issues. They can be used to call for action or to express support or condemnation on a particular issue. For example, the UN has adopted numerous resolutions condemning human rights abuses and calling for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. UN resolutions also have the power to impose international sanctions on states or individuals deemed to be in violation of international law. These sanctions are further explained in one of the following passages of the General Overview.

In the military realm, UN resolutions can authorize the use of force to address threats to international peace and security. The UN Security Council has the power to authorize the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows for the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. This power has been exercised on numerous occasions, including in response to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and the 2011 intervention in Libya.

UN resolutions are a powerful tool for addressing issues of international concern and promoting peace and security around the world. While they are not always effective in achieving their goals, they play a crucial role in shaping the international community's response to conflicts and other challenges to international peace and security.

Peacekeeping:

Another source of political power for the UN is its ability to deploy peacekeeping forces.

Peacekeeping missions are deployed by the UN to help maintain or restore peace in conflict-affected areas. These missions can take a variety of forms, including military, civilian, and humanitarian. The UN's peacekeeping efforts began in 1948 when the organization deployed its first peacekeeping mission to the Middle East to monitor a ceasefire between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Since then, the UN has established over 70 peacekeeping missions, with the aim of reducing violence and promoting stability in conflict-affected areas. The UN currently has more than 100,000 personnel deployed in 15 missions around the world.

Peacekeeping missions are typically deployed to areas where there is a threat to international peace and security, such as in cases of civil war or armed conflict. The UN deploys a range of peacekeeping operations, including traditional peacekeeping missions, special political missions, and peacebuilding missions.

Traditional peacekeeping missions involve the deployment of military and civilian personnel to monitor and maintain a ceasefire between conflicted parties, as well as to provide humanitarian assistance and protect civilians. These missions often include a mandate to assist with the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants into society.



Special political missions, on the other hand, are typically focused on facilitating dialogue and negotiations between conflicting parties, as well as providing political and diplomatic support. These missions may also assist with the implementation of peace agreements and the establishment of democratic institutions.

Peacebuilding missions, meanwhile, are focused on longer-term efforts to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace. These missions may involve a range of activities, including supporting the development of civil society, strengthening the rule of law, and promoting economic development.

The UN's peacekeeping efforts have had a significant impact on international peace and security, and have played a crucial role in resolving conflicts and promoting stability in various parts of the world. However, peacekeeping operations are not without their challenges, and the UN has faced criticism for its handling of certain missions, including allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct by peacekeepers, as well as not being able to prevent or stop certain conflicts, such as the Rwanda genocide in 1994 and the ongoing conflict in Syria. In addition, peacekeeping missions can be costly, and there have been concerns about the financial burden on member states, particularly those that contribute the majority of troops and financial resources

Despite these challenges, the UN's peacekeeping efforts remain an important tool for promoting peace and security around the world. As the global community continues to grapple with conflicts and challenges to international peace and security, the role of peacekeeping will continue to be vital in helping to prevent and resolve conflicts and promote stability in conflict-affected areas.

Sanctions:

The UN also has the power to impose sanctions as a means of promoting compliance with international law and achieving its goals. It's a measure taken by the UN to pressure a country to comply with international law or to deter it from engaging in certain activities. These measures can range from economic and financial measures, such as trade embargoes and asset freezes, to travel bans and arms embargoes. The UN has used sanctions to address a range of issues, including nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and human rights abuses.

The UN Security Council is the only UN organ that can adopt legally binding resolutions, which is why it has the authority to impose sanctions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows the organization to take action to maintain or restore international peace and security. In order to impose sanctions, The UN Security Council must adopt a resolution that is binding on all UN member states. It can also establish a sanctions committee to monitor and enforce the measures.



Sanctions can be an effective tool for promoting compliance with international law, but they can also have unintended consequences and impact innocent civilians. There have been cases where sanctions have led to widespread suffering and even death, as was the case in Iraq in the 1990s. In their effectiveness in achieving their intended goals. One of the most well-known examples of UN sanctions is the comprehensive sanctions regime imposed on Iraq following the Gulf War in the 1990s. These measures included a trade embargo, an arms embargo, and financial and travel restrictions. These sanctions were intended to force Iraq to comply with UN resolutions related to its weapons of mass destruction program and its occupation of Kuwait. While the sanctions were successful in getting Iraq to comply with some of the UN's demands, they also had unintended consequences, such as causing widespread suffering among the Iraqi people and hindering the country's economic development.

Other examples of UN sanctions include those imposed on North Korea in response to its nuclear missile programs, on Syria in response to its use of chemical weapons, and on various individuals and groups involved in terrorism or other illicit activities.

While sanctions can be effective for achieving certain foreign policy objectives, they also have the potential to cause harm to the people of the targeted country and can have unintended consequences. Therefore, it is important for the UN and member states to carefully consider the potential impacts of sanctions and to ensure that they are targeted and proportionate to the issue being addressed.

Influence:

With 193 member states, the UN has political power through its influence on global public opinion, its ability to shape international discourse, and its influence on international relations. One of the main ways in which the UN influences global public opinion is through its use of media and communication. The UN has a number of outlets through which it communicates with the public, including its official website, social media accounts, and press releases. These channels allow the UN to disseminate information about its activities, decisions, and policies to a global audience. The UN also uses these channels to raise awareness about important issues and advocate for action on issues such as climate change, human rights, and sustainable development.

Another way in which the UN influences global public opinion is through its peacekeeping missions. These missions often receive significant media attention, and the UN's efforts to maintain peace and protect civilians can shape public perceptions of the organization and its role in the world.

In addition to its media and communications efforts and peacekeeping missions, the UN also influences global public opinion through its various bodies and agencies. For example, the UN Human



Rights Council is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world. Its work, including investigations, reportage, and presenting evidence-based recommendations, can have a significant impact on public opinion and policy. Just as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which work on development and children's rights, respectively.

Overall, the UN has a significant influence on global public opinion through its media and communications efforts, peacekeeping missions, and work through various bodies and agencies. As the world's largest international organization, it plays a vital role in shaping international relations and promoting cooperation among nations.

Security Council:

The UN Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations and is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. As previously mentioned, it has the power to take a variety of measures to address threats to peace and security, including authorizing the use of force and imposing sanctions. However, despite its important role, the Security Council has faced a number of problems over the years that have limited its effectiveness.

One of the main problems of the Security Council is its composition. The Council has 15 members, 5 of which are permanent states with veto power (the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France), and 10 of which are elected for two-year terms. This composition reflects the global power dynamics of the post-World War II era and has led to criticism that the Council is not representative of the global community. In particular, the veto power of the permanent members has been criticized for giving a small group of countries disproportionate influence over the Council's decision, keeping in mind that the Security Council is the only UN organ that can adopt legally binding resolutions.

Another problem with the Security Council is its decision-making process. The council operates on the principle of consensus, meaning that all members must agree on a decision for it to be adopted. This can lead to inaction when there is disagreement among members, particularly when the permanent members with veto powers disagree.

Veto power

A veto in the United Nations is a power that allows a member of the UN Security Council to block the adoption of a resolution or decision. The veto power is held by the five permanent members of the Security Council, who are often referred to as the "P5".



The veto power was established as part of the UN's Charter, which was signed in 1945, and is meant to ensure that the Security Council can effectively fulfill its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. The veto power allows the P5 countries to prevent the adoption of resolutions or decisions that they believe could harm their national interests or the interests of their allies.

In order to be adopted, a resolution or decision of the Security Council must receive the affirmative vote of at least nine of the council's 15 members, and must not be vetoed by any of the P5 members. This means that the veto power of the P5 countries is very influential, as it allows them to block the adoption of resolutions or decisions even if a majority of the council's other members support them.

The veto power has been controversial, as it gives the P5 countries a disproportionate amount of influence in the UN's decision-making process, and has been used in the past to block the adoption of resolutions that address important global issues, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and human rights abuses. Some have called for reforms to the veto power, such as limiting its use or eliminating it altogether, in order to make the UN's decision-making process more inclusive and transparent.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
26th June 1945	The United Nations Charter is adopted at the San Francisco Conference, establishing the United Nations as a global organization for peace and security.
24th November 1945	The United Nations is founded when the Charter is signed by the representatives of 50 countries.
1st March 1946	The first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly is held in London.
10th December 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
24th October 1949	The United Nations headquarters is officially opened in New York City.
25th June 1950	The Security Council passes Resolution 84, authorizing member states to use military force to defend South Korea from the North Korean



invasion. This marks the first time that the United Nations has used its military power.

1st November 1956	The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) is established to maintain a cease-fire between Israel and Egypt in the Suez Crisis. This marks the first time that the United Nations has deployed a peacekeeping force.
25th June 1960	The United Nations establishes the UN Peacekeeping Force to help maintain a cease-fire between the Republic of the Congo and various rebel groups.
4th October 1965	The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is established to help maintain a cease-fire between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.
1st April 1988	The United Nations Observer Mission in Afghanistan (UNOMA) is established to monitor a cease-fire between the Afghan government and various rebel groups.
16th September 1994	The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) is established to help restore peace in Rwanda following the Rwanda genocide.
13th June 2000	The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is established to help restore peace and stability in Kosovo following the Kosovo War.
31st October 2000	The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is established to help restore peace in Sierra Leone following a civil war.
26th August 2004	The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) is established to protect civilians and promote human rights in the Central African Republic and Chad.
29th March 2005	The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is established to help implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.
15th July 2006	The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is established to help maintain a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon.
8th December 2006	The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is established to help restore peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the civil war.
15th July 2011	The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is established to help support peace and stability in South Sudan following its independence from Sudan.



17th August 2014	The United Nations Mission in Ebola-affected Countries (UNMEER) is established to coordinate the international response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.
20th December 2016	The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is established to help restore peace and stability in the Central African Republic following the civil war.
25th May 2021	The Security Council passes Resolution 2539, establishing the United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) to help support the Somali government in its efforts to restore peace and stability in the country.

Major Parties Involved

Since the United Nations has 193 member states, they are all involved in the UN and its political and military powers. However, the 5 permanent members of the Security Council have the biggest impact on resolutions and decisions, due to their veto powers.

China

China as one of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council, in particular, has been one of the most influential members of the UN, utilizing its robust economic, political and military power to increase its diplomatic clout and shape the development of international peace. China has used its veto power 17 times in total.

Russia

In the wake of the end of World War II and the formation of the United Nations, Russia has become an integral player in the organization's political and military strength. From a strict adherence to UN regulations to providing significant contributions in both personnel and military supplies, Russia is invested in furthering its role in UN operations. Russia has used its power to veto a resolution 120 times.

The United States

Over the years, the United Nations has grown and developed with the help of numerous countries, of which the United States has been a key supporter. As one of the most powerful nations on Earth, the United States' role in building up the United Nations has been crucial. As another member of the so-called P5 countries, the US has used its veto power 82 times.



The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has long been a major player in the political and military spheres of the United Nations. Historically, the country has made strong contributions to the strength and power of the organization, seeking to promote its values and serve as a beacon of stability and democracy for the world. In the modern era, the UK has remained a leader in international peacekeeping, actively participating in both military and political operations of the UN in addition to providing emotional, financial, and material resources for its missions. The UK has vetoed resolutions 29 times.

France

France has been a major player in international politics and military power since the formation of the United Nations in 1945. Despite the country's relatively small size, it has wielded enormous influence, emerging at the forefront of global diplomacy and defense. With France's accession to the UN, it gained the opportunity to contribute to collective security and stability, as well as represent its own interests in the international arena. France has used its veto power 16 times.

Possible Solutions

There are several possible solutions to the issues previously mentioned concerning the United Nations' political and military power. One of the key challenges facing the UN is the issue of its decision-making process, which is often criticized for being slow, opaque, and lacking in inclusivity. In order to address these concerns and make the UN more effective in fulfilling its mandate, it is important to consider reforms to the organization's decision-making process. One potential reform is to increase the representation of developing countries in the UN's key decision-making bodies. Currently, the UN's Security Council and General Assembly are dominated by a small group of powerful countries, which limits the participation of other nations in the organization's decision-making process. By increasing the representation of developing countries, the UN could ensure that a wider range of perspectives is taken into account formulating policies and making decisions.

Another potential reform is to enhance the role of the General Assembly in shaping the UN's policies and actions. The General Assembly is currently a largely consultative body, with the Security Council having the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. By giving the General Assembly more decision-making authority, the UN could ensure that a broader range of voices is heard and that the organization's policies reflect the views of a wider range of member states.

Another important reform would be to increase transparency and accountability in the UN's decision-making process. This could involve making the organization's meetings and negotiations more open and accessible, and publishing more detailed information about the decisions that are made and the reasoning behind them. By increasing transparency, the UN could build greater trust and confidence in its decision-making process among member states and the general public.



Overall, reforming the UN's decision-making process is crucial for ensuring that the organization is able to effectively address global challenges and promote international cooperation. By increasing the representation of developing countries, enhancing the role of the General Assembly, and increasing transparency and accountability, the UN can become a more inclusive and effective forum for addressing global issues.

The UN's capacity to respond to global crises and conflicts desperately needs to be improved. One solution to this issue could involve strengthening the UN's peacekeeping operations, as well as increasing its capacity to provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflict and natural disasters. The UN could also work more closely with regional organizations, such as the African Union, to address conflicts and crises within their respective regions.

However, it is as important to improve the UN's ability to prevent conflicts from occurring in the first place. This can involve supporting initiatives that promote dialogue and mediation between parties in conflict and working to address the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability. The UN could also play a greater role in promoting disarmament and arms control measures, which can help reduce the risk of conflicts arising due to the proliferation of weapons.

Finally, the UN could work on strengthening its partnership with other global actors, including civil society organizations, the private sector, and individual states. By building strong collaborative relationships, the UN can leverage the expertise and resources of these partners to address global challenges and promote international cooperation.

Altogether, addressing the issue of the UN's political and military power will require a multi-faceted approach that involves reforms to the organization's internal process, an enhanced capacity to respond to global crises and conflicts, efforts to prevent conflicts from occurring, and strengthened partnerships with other global actors. By taking these steps, The UN can play a more effective role in promoting peace and security around the world.

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