

RESEARCH ARTICLE

United Nations Organisation@80: Interrogating its Current Relevance and Exploring its Prospects for the Future

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Abstract

This study investigates the relevance of the United Nations Organization (UNO) after 80 years of existence under the theme “Better Together: 80 Years and More for Peace, Development, and Human Rights.” The study examines the extent to which the United Nations has achieved its primary objectives of sustaining global peace, protecting human rights, and promoting development in the contemporary world order. In recent years, the organization’s effectiveness has been called into question due to structural limitations, veto power politics in the Security Council, financial crises, and a perceived inability to respond decisively to global conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine wars. The study examines the underlying causes of the UN’s diminishing relevance and considers prospects for regaining its legitimacy and effectiveness in a fast changing, globalised world. The study is based on the Constitutional Theory of International Organizations, which emphasizes legality, legitimacy, and institutional functionality within global governance. It employs historical, functional, and analytical approaches and draws on secondary data sources. The study concludes that extensive reforms of the UN’s structure, particularly the Security Council, financial autonomy, and renewed commitment to member state equality are required to restore the organization’s function as a credible platform for international peace, security, and cooperation.

1. Introduction

UN like its predecessor (League of Nations 1920-1945) in the world, it was created after World War II to promote global peace, security, and stability for development. As the WWII was about to end in 1945, states/countries were in confusion and uncoordinated as the world needed peace and security. Representatives of 50 states met in the UN conference on international organisation in San Francisco, California from April 25 to 26 June, 1945, where/when they drafted and signed the UN charter which led to the creation of a new international organisation called UNO which was to prevent another World War and ratified by Britain, France, former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics(USSR) now Russia, China and United states of America, with majorities of other signatories

to the charter (Grinin, Llyin & Andrew, 2016:59); Palmer & Parkins, 2007:310).

According to Weiss (2015:12223)

The actual establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War aimed, in the soaring words of the charter’s opening paragraph, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. This objective reaffirmed the logic that a generation earlier had grown out of the death, destruction, and violent legacy of the First World War. A Universal intergovernmental organisation dealing with peace and security as well as economic cooperation would necessarily be at the centre of the new international order after the second worldwide conflagration with a half-century...

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Furthermore, UN was constituted to give humanitarian assistance to those in need, protect human rights, guide international law with principal organs such as General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and social Council, Trusteeship Council, international Court of Justice as well as many specialised agencies, through the instrument of key documents: UN charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, convention on the right of the child, Statute of the International Court of Justice, annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the organization and UN spearheaded campaigns on sustainable Development Goals, common agenda, the summit of the future, climate action, action for peacekeeping, Global crisis response Group, Disability inclusive strategy, fight racism, hate speech, LGBTICE+ people, safety of journalists, rule of law, action to counter terrorism, children and armed conflict, violence against women, refugees and migration, action agenda on displacement, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse of prevention of genocide and the responsibility to protect the Holocaust, the question of Palestine, Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and decolonisation (UN-Peace, nd:12; Grinin, et al, 2016:93)

According to Goldstein & Pevehouse (2012:236):

The UN is the closest thing to a world government that has ever existed, but it is not a world government. Its members are sovereign states that have not empowered the UN to enforce its will within states territories except with the consent of those states' governments. Thus, although the UN strengthens world order, its design acknowledges the realities of international anarchy and the unwillingness of states to surrender their sovereignty. Within these limits, the basic purpose of the UN is to provide a global institutional structure through which states can sometimes settle conflicts with less reliance on the use of force.

As such, the UN in its firmness is based upon moral obligation as contained in the charter to peaceful resolution of disputes and the prevention of the use of force. It enables member states to help in its activities in line with the charter, preventing states from helping one another against the UN's decisions on other member states. (Shaw, 1997:875).

1.1 Characteristics of UN

1.1.1 Maintenance of Peacekeeping

The core mandate of the UN is the preservation of peace, security, and the prevention of what can lead

states to World War in the immediate future. This is sacrosanct to the lifestyle of the organization where mechanisms have been put in place to prevent war, conflict, and unavoidable tensions among states.

1.1.2 Sovereign Equality of States

This is the hallmark of the UN to exercise equal status among sovereign countries, as usually exhibited at the General Assembly, where each state has a voting right to all issues brought to it.

1.1.3 Promoting Humanitarian Aid

This is exercise to provide assistance to people affected by war.

Safeguarding the enforcement of international law for the betterment of the world among states and people in the exercise of justice and fairness.

Coordinate actions for member states to achieve their respective goals and aspirations (Hoole,2011:6)

1.2 Prerequisite for Membership

For any state that wanted to become a member of the UN. It requires the following criteria for such admission into the organization in order to be well integrated through strict and full compliance, which must be acceptable to all, especially the General Assembly of the UN, with the recommendation from the Security Council of the UN.

1.2.1 Statehood

the state intending to become a member of the UN must be an independent state, enjoy internal and external sovereignty, which must have been exercised by its citizens in their collective given population (Bishop,1948:928)

1.2.2 Peaceful Intentions

It is open to all peace-loving states that are willing to maintain peace, stability, and cooperate as against conflict, war, and confrontations (Vidmar, 2021:202).

1.2.3 Commitment to the UN Charter

Must be ready to accept the UN charter as the document to conduct the affairs of sovereign states in their multilateral engagements across the world.

1.2.4 Capacity to Fulfil Obligations

To have the capacity and ability to carry out the obligations, principles, and requirements of the organization (Yuen-Li, 2017:292)

Application for membership: The state must apply for membership to join the UN in the first place. This is necessary for any state to declare its intention formally by applying for membership (Shaw, 1997:298)

2. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, adopting historical, descriptive, and analytical methods to analyze the research problem. The study design relies on a thorough review of existing literature, including scholarly articles, books, and reliable internet sources. The data collection procedure includes a systematic search for relevant sources, followed by an extensive review and synthesis of the findings. The data collected was analyzed using a qualitative approach, involving an in-depth examination and interpretation of the sources to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to the study. A rigorous and transparent process for the collection and analysis of data ensures the reliability and validity of the findings.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the constitutional theory of international organizations as the theoretical framework. It explains the role of international organizations in the international system as vital and central in the understanding of states' behaviours, actors, and institutions. It examines the legitimacy of global bodies and their influence in inter-state relations. It is the discussion of their legality and supremacy in such supranational bodies, as they are critical players in current international governance. The theory is the application of constitutional principles on international organisations established to uphold, execute, and apply their guidelines, structures, and objectives as stated in such a charter or article, as the case may be. It discusses state affairs, interests, attitudes, and power relations within the purview of international organisations for integration, cooperation, interdependence, and collaboration. The theory is both functional and social because it handles member states' interplay and multilateral engagements to analyse the institutional background of international bodies, its membership contractual basis, decision-making mechanisms, and the extent to which non-state actors and authorities aggregate binding/collective decisions. It projects both states and global bodies within and among the international system in world governance with problem-solving abilities and strength to surmount them as they emerged (Hooghe, Lenz & Marks, 2019:28; Qates, 2020:8; Bayeh, 2014:12; Lisa, 1998:744; Peters, 2008:17; Mustapha, 2022:11).

According to Peter (2021:652)

Looking in more details at that ongoing third wave, it identifies and seeks to pull out constitutional model which upscales the proto-democratic practices in international organisations by strengthening forums for participations and contestation which rectifies to the North-South imbalances, inter-alia rooted in the colonial heritage by involving some actors from the global south and which tackles the global question upfront.

After World War II, Different representations in international bodies emerged through the official and unofficial fora that brought divergent interests and goals (Cogan, 2009:208). Among the scholars, writers, and theorists of the theory are: Linos & Tom (2016); Lake (2007); Teuber (2018); Tangit (2018); Shinata (2000); Peters (1999); McKinnon (2005), and many others. They opined on the relevance and benefits of international organisations to actors, institutions, and states across the world.

The merits of the theory include

- It has been successful in reducing the cost of communication and exchange across international borders
- It ensures equality among member states
- It has ensured collective bargaining and engagement, rather than confrontation at the least, while the weakness of the theory are;
 - I. It doubts the empirical reality of constitutionalisation and calls into question the analytical value of constitutionalism.
 - II. It is not sufficient to set aside the sociality of governance as how the member states feel and think about the bond together in collective rule, which is greatly practiced with reciprocity narratives.

The relevance of the theory to the study lies in the fact that the UN as one of the biggest international organisations in the existing time, is guided and coded by states' behaviours and structures of its own, while the theory equally shapes the environment it operates and aggregates the conduct of member states for global governance (McDougal, 2018:13)

4. Why the UN is not Relevant in Recent Times

The UN is at a crossroads in its existence and relevance in recent times. Below are the factors and

issues associated with the UN not being relevant, which represent critical thematic areas.

- I. Structural Challenges: With the test of the utility structure of the organisation about 80 years old, it needs to restructure some of its organs, either principal or specialised agencies, which were established in the aftermath of World War II rhetoric. The international system dynamics and reality in the 21st century requires adjustment in order to meet up with the emerging consequences of globalisation, technology-driven AI, climate change, and social media revolution of many actors unknown that influence its decisions in unconscious manner. As such, this defect has rendered the UN irrelevant these days.
- II. The history has been full of narratives, contradictions, ideological divides, rivalry, balance of power, and power blocks. All these manifest greatly with the people of the global south, their resources, and lives, which have called for the reform and re-organisation beyond power politics because they have been excluded from the real power play in their international role, as against the equality of all sovereign states (O'malley & Walker,2025:268; Muftau,2016:155).
- III. The UN is no longer relevant as a result of the lack of fundamental reform of the Security Council, which is long overdue. The Veto power politics is critical to its irrelevance, especially when it exercises such Veto on the decisions of the General Assembly. A recent event was when the majority of member states voted massively 142 in favour of a Palestinian state, 10 against, and 12 abstentions just before the commencement of the 80th anniversary of the UN. This affirmative decision will still be voted on by the Security Council, which, in a practical sense, is a mockery of the efforts of the member states in favour of such a move. Again the Security Council needs to be enlarged to represent and accommodate the entire people of the world. The above narratives have paralysed and made ineffective the UN itself in the face of the international system (Doris, 2012:394).
- IV. Another area of irrelevance displayed is in peace operations conducted by agencies of the UN, where it is to maintain peace and security using force if necessary, but the big powers among the UN have prevented such agencies from exercising some measures of force to help restore and maintain peace in order to achieve their objectives.

It has led to the question being asked why the P5 holds the bulk power? As it has no hard power in international law to choose compliance except that the participants decided to abide by such decisions (Duursma, Bara, Wilen, Hellmuller, Karlsrud & Oksamytna, 2023:420; Thakur,2017:16; Gardiner,2007:38).

- V. There is apparent disregard for its humanitarian law in conflict zones being violated internationally. The Israel-Palestine wars have been a case in point where the UN, even its staff, have been deliberately targeted and have been helpless to know what to do as Security Council resolutions on ceasefire have been rejected many times, which has weakened the relevance of the UN. The Ukraine-Russian war of attrition is another situation reminiscent of the Cold War between big powers ' -geo-political interests (Balakir, 2021:38), Ray,2020:555; Okeke,2025:78)
- VI. Under multilateral cooperation and collaborations on the platform of the UN charter, it could be wrong for a state to unilaterally dissolve itself from the UN through its domestic policies being applied. President Donald Trump of the USA has solely introduced tariffs and trade policies against many sovereign states, which have threatened the objective principles of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Wherein, every sovereign state has the absolute right to its trade policy, and such cannot be punished in any hegemonic manner. Again, the US has, on its own, withdrawn funding from the purse of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Development Agency for International Development (USAID), and has recently banned Palestinian delegates from entering the UN to attend the 80th General Assembly meeting of the UN by denying them a visa. If a member state could ban or prevent another member state (though of observer's status) from attending the UN General Assembly forum, where lies its power, relevance and importance (Yesufu,2025:219; Raimo, 2002, 28)?
- VII. UN unable to finance its budgets: This comes into play as member states are not paying their dues as expected. It is instructive to note that the US is the largest payer of its dues to the UN; however, it is no longer committed to its prompt payment of its due owed to the UN. The resultant effects of this are that some of its mandates for implementation, UN staff salaries in the headquarters and abroad are being hampered and delayed to the extent that

regional offices are being reduced to contingency status, So, when an international organisation is starved of funds, it renders its functions, ability, and capacity useless and inoperative.

VIII. Double Standard Syndrome: it is evident in the UN workings and decision-making systems that the issue of double standard has affected the neutrality and objectivity among member states. Similar cases have been used differently to resolve issues cropping up between developed states on one side, and among developing states on the other side of the show. The manifestation of national interest and strategic alliances has put one group over the other in the same organisation of various sentiments as against the principle of its establishments. As such, resolutions are made by whom to whom and in whose favour. It is therefore set in frustration and desperation from the global south (Pearson, 2017:528; Shai,2013:6).

IX. The emergence of contemporary new international organisations like BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and by extension NATO, is efficiently projecting these bodies to their aspirational objectives. In the face of the UN, these new organisations have found solace and commitment in their new member states with respect to security, cooperation, collaboration, trade, energy, and governance. By implication, member states in these bodies have shown divided loyalty to the UN as a result of its inactivity and docility.

5. Ways the UN can Restore its Past Glory Through the Present Time Towards its Future Prospects.

Nevertheless, despite its limitations in relevancy, it continues to address world challenges that threaten its creation, weighing the durability of the liberal global order, the World Organisation evolving from the scourge of war and humanitarian crisis, which have brought the establishment of the UN after World War II. It therefore requires the following inputs in order to retain its relevant and present glory.

1. To be assertive means the UN needs to be firm, declarative, confirmatory and definite in resolution and decision-making regardless of the countries involved in any issues that require its action, like climate change, civil war, famine, refugee/migration issues.
2. To modernise its support-based mentality from Pre-WW II, Pre-colonial occupation of political and

economic neo-colonialism to economic prosperity, technological and political interdependence in sustainable development goals (Nagaraju & Amaresh, 2020:4).

3. To articulate solidarity for member states in political, economic, and social emancipation challenges like the people of Palestine
4. To be self-sufficient to create and manage its finances from debts and economic mess to a viable and independent entity (Rabie, 2021:12).
5. To maintain and preserve the occurrence of WW III from happening through conflict resolutions, peace building, and peacekeeping before they go out of control
6. To accommodate and cooperate with emerging international organisations for wider collaborations to address global challenges as they emerge from anywhere in the world (Ariye, 2014, 28).
7. To ensure that all the member states pay their annual dues promptly.
8. To assist member states from third world origin on how to manage their natural resources for wealth creation, good governance, transparency, and accountability.
9. To avoid the politics of double standard among member states since the charter of the organization upheld the sovereign equality of all member states.
10. To critically and wholistically yield to the call for the reform of the UN and its principal organs like the Security Council for enlargement membership from five (5) and above in order to reflect the global population and wider representation, and to review its UNSC Veto power status from being in conflict or variance with matters or decisions overwhelmingly adopted on the floor of the General Assembly by the majority of member states, such as the case of Palestine.
11. To avoid being under the influence of the world powers or Security Council members.
12. To review and improve its peacekeeping operations in order to withstand new threats and global challenges evolving with the use of AI and modern technology

6. Effects of Globalisation on the UN Performance

As the global world has now been attached and becomes a single community with varying latitudes of issues,

factors and challenges, the UN has not been left out in the dynamic and pragmatic process where member states, regional institutions, actors and their people are dependent on one another for the world, society and human being to progress and address critical sectors inhibiting sustainable growth. The interdependence of states in global governance connects technology, economics, politics, culture, and social existence through the media and new information systems. It therefore means that globalisation channels the society through state institutions to the UN for wider cooperation, collaboration, and even competition, which have increased international trade and investment (Mustapha, 2022:14).

7. Essentials of Consolidating Democracy and Fair Play in the UN

The UN has been able to make democracy attractive, attainable, and sustainable as the majority of its member states are under democratic government in one way or another. It places development, democracy, and peace as one of the core values of the charter, while it abhors ingredients of democratic norms as part of good governance. It detests arbitrary rule, bad governance, and autocratic tendency as against the feature of democracy. As such, the UN has adopted the following elements as part of its principles:

- (i) Commitment to majority rules: member states are enjoined to be committed to majority rules in their various states where popular and wider rules are accepted by their subjects. It entails democratic practices that ensures pluralism and representation, hereby expanding beyond functional territorial and proportional representation in any democratic system. (Johari, 2009;378; Inskumah, 2913:6)n
- (ii) Safeguards of the rights of a few minorities. It is to ensure that member states protect and safeguard the right of the minorities in plural societies to exist and fulfil their fundamental human rights to association, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, etc, as adopted by the UNGA in 1992 resolution 47/135. It translates that their minority population within the larger population has the right of recognition in equal terms with the rest of the community.
- (iii) Consensus and agreement on equality of all people, the rule of law, and the entrenchment of freedom in member states' domestic affairs are enjoined according to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) article 26 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(UDHR) article 7, which ensures no discrimination against any person in whatever circumstances.

- (iv) The rights of citizens to appear before the competent judicial system without fear or favour are guaranteed. It implied that citizens have the right to fear hearing on their cases (Zkariah,2017:189)

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, after eighty years of existence, the United Nations finds itself at a critical point in its historical mandate to uphold global peace, security, and development. Although its fundamental tenets are still pertinent, its operational methods, institutional frameworks, and decision-making processes have faced challenges in adapting to modern global realities characterized by geopolitical tensions, economic inequalities, and technological advancements. The study finds that the decreasing relevance of the UN is mostly due to the rigid nature of its institutional framework—especially the disproportionate power dynamics inside the Security Council, limited funds, and its continued incidence of double standards in its responses to global crises. The UN must urgently undertake extensive structural reforms to restore its credibility and functional relevance, democratize the Security Council, guarantee equitable representation of all regions, and reassess the use of veto power. Moreover, the organization ought to augment financial autonomy by diversifying financing streams, reinforce the impartial enforcement of international law, and advocate for genuine multilateralism rooted on equality, justice, and accountability among member states. Rebuilding the UN's moral authority demands both institutional reform and a renewed commitment by member states to really uphold the values of the Charter with collective responsibility. Only through these reforms can the United Nations restore its global relevance and effectively address the complex challenges of the twenty-first century.

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