



The united nations and challenges of sustaining peace in the middle east: A perspective

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Abstract

The United Nations was established in 1945 to maintain and sustain world peace by working to avert wars and ensure security of the sovereignties of the independent member-states. Following the collapse of the seemingly challenged organisation before it, the League of Nations, the United Nations has worked since establishment to settle international conflicts and foster collaboration, especially through its peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives. Due to this function, the organisation has been at the epicentre of several conflicts, including some of the most complicated and enduring ones in the Middle East. This paper undertook a review of the difficulties the United Nations is faced with in maintaining world peace, with a particular emphasis on the intricate Middle East crises and their wider ramifications. The paper adopted realist theory as popularised by scholars like Hans Morgenthau as its theoretical framework through which it emphasised the importance of national interest and respective state capacities which serve to limit the cooperative and interdependence initiatives that organizations like the United Nations stand for. It also adopted analytical and descriptive approaches through use of data from secondary source including scholarly articles, policy papers, reports and period. The data sought were targeted at historical evaluation of the Middle East crises and the sources of limitation to the United Nations' effort at sustaining peace in the region. In addition to UN's crippling peacekeeping efforts, this paper highlighted the shortcomings of the existing peacekeeping structures in relation to various conflicts in the Middle-East including the Israeli-Palestine Conflict, Israeli-Yemen crisis, Israeli-Lebanon Crisis, Israeli-Iranian hostility as well as the Syrian civil war posed potent threat to the world peace and are limiting the United Nations's efficacy in sustaining world order. This paper found that power struggles, political instability, sectarian conflicts and entrenched interference from outside of the Middle East have served as constraints to United nations' stance on peace building and stability in the region. The paper therefore suggested boosting member-state cooperation, increasing funding for the United Nations' peace keeping infrastructure by member-states and instituting attendant reforms towards strengthening enforcement capacity of the United Nations, by democratising the Security Council or scrapping the veto status of a selected few member-states.

Keywords: Conflict, Global Peace, Middle East, Peacekeeping, Realism, Regional Power, United Nations

Introduction

A stable, wealthy World depends on international peace and security where societies can thrive, the economy can expand, and individuals can enjoy secured, satisfying lives. Conflicts, on the other hand, cause widespread misery, damage to infrastructure, and disruption of social order. There must be enduring World peace in light of these repercussions. To achieve these humanity sustaining goals, the World leaders made frantic efforts at stemming the tides of inter-state conflicts through establishment of international organizations that could mediate inter-states conflicts to prevent them from degenerating to wars, starting with the League of Nations, which was an aftermath of the World War I.

The League of Nations was an intergovernmental organization founded on January 10, 1920, as a result of the Paris Peace Conference that ended the First World War. It was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. Its primary goals, as stated in its Covenant, included preventing wars through collective security and disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. Other issues in this and related treaties included labour conditions, just treatment of native inhabitants, human and drug trafficking, the arms trade, global health, prisoners of war, and protection of minorities in Europe. At its greatest extent from September 28, 1934, to February 23, 1935, it had 58 members (Lumen, 2024).

The diplomatic philosophy behind the League represented a fundamental shift from the preceding hundred years. The League lacked its own armed force and depended on the Great Powers to enforce its resolutions, keep to its economic sanctions, and provide an army when needed. However, the Great Powers were often reluctant to do so. Sanctions could hurt League members, so they were reluctant to comply. During the Second Italo-Abyssinian War, when the League accused Italian soldiers of targeting Red Cross medical tents, Benito Mussolini responded that the League is very well when sparrows shout, but not good at all when eagles fall out. After a number of notable successes and some early failures in the 1920s, the League ultimately proved incapable of preventing aggression by the Axis powers in the 1930s. Germany withdrew from the League, as did Japan, Italy, Spain, and others. The onset of the Second World War showed that the League had failed its primary purpose to prevent any future world war. The League lasted for 26 years; the United Nations (UN) replaced it after the end of the Second World War in April 1945 and inherited a number of agencies and organizations founded by the League (Lumen, 2024).

Since its establishment, the United Nations (UN) has sought to maintain World peace, avert wars, and provide security. The United Nations has worked to settle international conflicts and foster collaboration, especially through its peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives (UN Charter, 1945). Due to this function, the organisation has

been at the epicentre of several conflicts, including some of the most complicated and enduring ones in the Middle East. Connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, the Middle East has long been a region of geopolitical and cultural importance. But it is also characterised by long-standing disputes and power struggles, such as the Syrian civil war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Yemeni crisis. These conflicts are not isolated incidents, they affect international relations, involving both regional and global forces, and frequently have profound humanitarian repercussions. Due to their complexity, wide range of players, and frequent fuelling by ingrained political, religious and historical grievances, the Middle East crises provided a challenge to the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts (Cammack and Dunne, 2018) [7].

Through its peacekeeping deployments, diplomacy and conflict resolution initiatives, the United Nations has worked to avert war and uphold World peace. Its peacekeeping missions are well known for their role in providing humanitarian assistance, promoting communication, and stabilising post-conflict regions. Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter gives the organisation the power to send troops to restore peace when global security is under severe threat (United Nations, 2024). UN peacekeeping forces work throughout the World, frequently in unstable areas, and are essential in reducing bloodshed, facilitating political transitions, and acting as a buffer between opposing factions.

However, there are particular challenges to the UN's peacekeeping mission in the Middle East. Powerful nations with vested interests are among the many local and international entities involved in the region's highly politicised disputes. The crises in the Middle East frequently involve non-state actors, ideologically opposing sides, and intricate alliances, in contrast to situations where peacekeeping forces can successfully monitor and enforce ceasefire. For example, the veto power by permanent members of the Security Council, some of which have close relations with states in conflict in the Middle East, have made it difficult for the UN to implement its resolutions (United Nations Security Council, 2020) towards peace. This intricate power structure has occasionally made it more difficult for the UN to take decisive action, highlighting the difficulties it has in carrying out its peacekeeping mission in the region.

The difficulties in maintaining international peace are best shown by several significant Middle East crises. With origins dating back to the early 20th century, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is among the longest-running conflicts in the World. Sovereignty, territory, and the right to self-determination are at the heart of this conflict. Hostilities persisted despite multiple UN resolutions advocating for peaceful resolutions, affecting not only the two major parties but also the stability of the region at large (UN, 2024a). A major obstacle to the UN's peace efforts is the conflict's intractable nature since continuous violence exacerbates animosity and scuttles diplomatic moves.

Since its started in 2011, the Syrian civil war has grown into a humanitarian catastrophe that has left millions of people displaced and hundreds of thousands of deaths. The Syrian government, opposition organisations, ISIS terrorist group, and international power blocs like the United States and Russia are just a few of the many parties involved in the war. The United Nations has had difficulty mediating

between competing interests and meeting the enormous humanitarian needs as a result of this complex conflict. In situations where external actors are well-established and when conditions on the ground make peacekeeping operations extremely risky, the Syrian crisis serves as a typical illustration of the seeming limitations of the UN interventions in the Middle East's multiple conflicts (Khaddour and Tokmajyan, 2024).

Yemen is similarly complicated as Syria. In addition to the problem with Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government, regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran are also involved in the Yemeni conflict, which started in 2014. With the attendant starvation, disease and loss of lives, this conflict has resulted in one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the World. The geographical nature of the conflict makes United Nations' efforts to promote peace through negotiations and provide relief materials for the suffering populace extremely difficult. The UN's challenges in maintaining peace in areas where regional conflicts are entangled with larger geopolitical rivalry manifested in the Yemen crisis (UN, 2024b).

The Middle East conflicts highlighted the significant obstacles the United Nations faces in upholding international peace. In addition to causing great pain to people, these conflicts have destabilised the region with adverse effects on socio-economic stability and international security. The UN's legitimacy and efficacy have been weakened in certain cases as a result of the frequent impasse in the Security Council, which is frequently caused by competing interests among the permanent members. Furthermore, conventional peacekeeping techniques are becoming less successful due to the growing number of non-state actors and the power of extremist organisations across the regions of the World.

Addressing these issues requires a dynamic strategy that incorporates political or diplomatic moves, aid, and efficient governments towards maintaining World peace. Even if the United Nations has made progress in fostering peace, the conflicts in the Middle East highlighted the need for more robust systems to handle intricate, multi-actor conflicts. The enduring nature of these crises emphasises how crucial it is to review and possibly modify the United Nations' peacekeeping tactics to successfully handle contemporary crises.

All things considered, the United Nations is essential to advancing World peace and stability, but its work in the Middle East brings to light serious difficulties it encounters in achieving that noble goal. The region's recurrent conflicts exposed the shortcomings of the present peacekeeping strategies and have significant ramifications for global peace. Economic hardship grows dissatisfaction, sectarian conflict splits society, political instability erodes governance, and outsiders' interference obstructs diplomatic advancement in conflict management. When taken as a whole, these issues foster an atmosphere in which peace initiatives find it difficult to gain traction, making the United Nations' efforts at maintaining World peace extremely difficult.

Literature Review

In general, the phrase "Middle East Crisis" refers to the intricate and continuous military, social, and political confrontations that have caused instability in the Middle East region in the past four decades. Civil wars, sectarian

conflicts, and geopolitical tensions are only a few of the problems that are part of this catastrophe. The civil wars in Syria, Yemen, and Libya are at the heart of the Middle East crises; they have caused serious humanitarian catastrophes, mass human displacement, and fatalities. Conflict between government forces, opposition groups, and extremist factions, for example, has displaced millions of people in Syria and negatively affected the stability of the region (Phillips, 2016) ^[33].

Wehrey (2018) opined that the sectarian conflicts exacerbated the situation in the Middle East, especially between Sunni and Shia Muslims. These religious ideological differences are particularly noticeable in Middle East nations like Iraq and Lebanon, and regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran frequently take advantage of them by aiding rival groups to strengthen their own influence. Violence and instability have increased as a result of this sectarian rivalry, which has intensified already-existing conflicts and transformed local disagreements into larger regional conflicts.

Conflicts in the Middle East have also been more intense due to geopolitical influence of the superpowers like the US and Russia. These nations back various groups, pursuing geopolitical objectives that prolong rather than end sectarian conflicts. Thus, the Middle East problem is not merely a local or regional issue, rather, it is the result of a complex interplay between internal and external factors that consistently threaten regional and global peace and security (Gause, 2014) ^[11].

For Boulding (2000) ^[5], the absence of violence and the development of amicable ties between nations are common definitions of World peace. A condition of world peace is one in which nations live side by side without engaging in conflict or armed aggression. As such, international agreements, balanced power dynamics, and the creation of conflict-avoidance governmental structures are how peace is attained.

Mearsheimer (2001) ^[25] asserted that world peace develops when countries cooperate on security accords, follow international law, and engage in diplomatic activities. International relations realists and liberals have different ideas about how to bring about world peace. Liberals contend that international cooperation and interdependence may bring about peace, while realists hold that a balance of power is necessary to do so.

According to Galtung (1969) ^[10], peace studies provided a broader definition of world peace, stressing not only the absence of conflict but also positive peace that encompasses equality, justice, and the welfare of all people. According to this viewpoint, establishing conditions that eradicate systemic violence and guarantee fair resource distribution is essential to achieving global peace. Therefore, establishing just and stable partnerships that promote security and prosperity for all countries is what constitutes world peace, which goes beyond the simple absence of conflict.

The steady operation of international systems, economic security and the preservation of political order among states are all considered aspects of global stability. It depends on safe economic systems, cordial international ties between nations, and strong international organisations that support conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Countries can cooperate in commerce, efficiently manage resources, and maintain security when these mechanisms function consistently, resulting in a stable international environment

(Brown, 2001) ^[6]. The foundation of peace and prosperity is global stability, which lowers the likelihood of conflict and allows countries to concentrate on development.

Since the Middle East plays a vital role in trade, energy production and geopolitical resourcefulness, the conflicts there seriously undermine global stability. Since the Middle East has more than 30% of the World's oil reserves, it is vital to the World's energy markets. Conflicts in oil-producing nations like Yemen, Libya, and Iraq impede global production, which raises and lowers oil prices globally. Global economies are impacted by fluctuating oil prices, which often raise the cost of products and services, cause inflation, and create economic instability (International Energy Agency, 2020). Consequently, the instability in the Middle East frequently jeopardises the stability of the global oil market and global economy.

Conflicts in the Middle East also pose a threat to global political order. Major powers with strategic interests in the region, such as the United States, Russia, and European countries, intervene when there is instability in the region. These actions frequently make confrontations more complex, increasing the military's involvement and the proliferation of weapons. Mass displacement is also a result of protracted hostilities, leading to refugee crises that spread to nearby areas and even Europe, which must deal with the social and economic strains brought on by these influxes (Gause, 2014) ^[11].

Furthermore, instability in the Middle East encourages extremism, which endangers global security. Organisations such as ISIS take advantage of regional unrest to attract new members and grow, impacting nations well beyond the Middle East. Thus, stability in the Middle East is deeply connected to global stability, as disruptions in this region create widespread challenges that resonate across the world (Gause, 2014) ^[11]. The Middle East has traditionally been one of the most difficult areas for the United Nations to conduct peacekeeping operations and manage international crises. The success of UN peacekeeping missions has been the subject of much research, particularly in regions with on-going hostilities.

Allee (2009) ^[1] highlighted the value of UN peacekeeping in areas where national governments are unable or unwilling to handle crises on their own. For instance, despite the narrow scope of their mandates, peacekeeping operations in Lebanon have been praised for bringing vital stability and lowering the likelihood of new conflicts. Similarly, UN humanitarian relief efforts in Syria and Iraq have lessened suffering and contributed to the maintenance of some degree of international supervision (Bellamy & Williams, 2021) ^[3]. However, war experts contended that because of limitations to the United Nations' power and funding, these operations frequently fail to bring about enduring peace.

The effect of geopolitical powers on the efficacy of UN peacekeeping is one significant constraint. Regional rivalries have a significant impact on Middle East crises, with nations like Saudi Arabia and Iran backing opposing groups in nations like Yemen and Syria. According to Nwefuru (2017) ^[30], these conflicts make it challenging for the United Nations to project objectivity since local groups frequently perceive UN forces as supporting particular interests, which compromises their legitimacy and efficacy. This apparent or actual lack of neutrality limits the UN's capacity to successfully promote peace talks and uphold decisions.

Another important factor influencing UN initiatives is international power conflicts. Nathag and Dennett (2017) indicated that permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council, especially China, Russia, and the United States, frequently utilise their veto to limit the reach of United Nations' resolutions and operations in the Middle East. For example, because Russia can veto resolutions that jeopardise its interests in the region, its involvement in Syria has hindered the UN's ability to take effective action on the war. Therefore, since states frequently put their strategic interests ahead of international peace initiatives, these political processes drastically diminish the UN's efficacy.

Conflicts over resources make UN peace initiatives in the Middle East even more difficult. Competition for essential resources like water and oil fuels a lot of the region's conflicts. According to Ash and Obradovich (2020) ^[2], these resource-driven tensions result in unresolvable disputes that defy conventional peacekeeping strategies. For instance, conflicts over water and oil resources in Syria have exacerbated the civil war, making it challenging for the United Nations to enforce ceasefires and peace accords. Furthermore, how resource conflicts frequently transcend national boundaries, attracting outside parties impede United Nations' capacity to find long-term solutions and impede peace processes.

In general, United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East has attracted mixed reports of few successes and severe hiccups. Regional geopolitics, global power struggles, and resource conflicts often limit the organization' intervention. These elements foster an atmosphere in which peacekeeping operations find it difficult to deal with the underlying causes of conflict, frequently making United Nations' initiatives susceptible to failure.

Theoretical Framework

This paper explored the role and difficulties of the United Nations in maintaining peace in the Middle East using realism as the theoretical framework. A prevalent theory in international affairs, realism places a strong emphasis on national interest, state power, and the certainty of state-to-state conflict in international relations. Prominent Realists like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz contended that states put their security and survival ahead of group objectives in a society without a central authority (Morgenthau, 1948 ^[28]; Waltz, 1979). This emphasis on self-interest frequently reduces the efficacy of global institutions like the United Nations, particularly in regions like the Middle East where power relations is complex and complicated.

According to realism, states behave largely to safeguard their interests and increase their power. Strong nations outside the region frequently have national interest to pursue in the Middle East such that clashes with the United Nations' neutralist stance on peacekeeping. For example, nations such as Russia, Iran and the United States have economic and strategic interests in the Middle East and often back opposing sides in wars and insurrections. This conduct is consistent with the Realist theory that nation-states acting in self-interest, frequently undermine peace efforts (Walt, 1985). As a result, these power-driven incentives place limitations on the ability of the United Nations to successfully mediate or settle disputes.

Realist doctrine holds that national interests take precedence over pledges to maintain World peace. Realists contended that governments only fund the United Nations or back peacekeeping when it serves their national interests. Whether a peacekeeping mission serves the interests of powerful member states is a common factor in the Security Council, as they can veto decisions of the United Nations. Realism holds that national interests drive state activities, even at the price of international peace (Sutterlin, 1995) ^[35]. For instance, Russia has vetoed every Security Council resolution on Syria that has frequently hampered United Nations' intervention efforts in the protracted civil war. This is a serious problem for the United Nations because the power dynamics among its major members sometimes influence or block its activities.

The constraint of collective security in a World with competitive states is another point of realism. According to Gilpin (1981) ^[12], because member nations act freely to safeguard their interests, international organisations like the UN have little power to manage or stop disputes. The United Nations finds it difficult to bring about enduring peace in the Middle East because of the long-standing hostilities between governments, despite the region's strong regional alliances and natural line of geopolitical solidarity. Realist theory therefore contended that maintaining peace in such an area is difficult since states tend to put security above cooperation, which frequently results in protracted conflicts and undermines United Nations peace initiatives. Lastly, realism shed light on how challenging it is to strike a balance between efforts at peace and power. Realists contended that a key aspect of international politics is the conflicting interests of powerful governments, which complicate the United Nations' position in the Middle East. This theoretical framework highlighted the difficulties the United Nations encounters since it has to balance opposing countries whose actions often cause regional instability and limit the organization's ability to influence events. Therefore, realism offers a useful perspective for comprehending the ongoing challenges facing the United Nations in maintaining peace in the Middle East.

The United Nations and the Middle East Crises

To promote peace and stability in an area characterised by decades of conflicts, the United Nations (UN) has been actively involved in the Middle East. The UN's involvement in significant crises like the Yemen crisis, the Syrian civil war, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demonstrates its broad reach. However, these missions highlighted important obstacles, including financial and legal limitations, member-state disagreements, and the intricacy of the problems themselves. These elements frequently impair the UN's capacity to maintain lasting peace.

The United Nations has always struggled with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which demand Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and peaceful negotiations, are among the many resolutions that have attempted to advance peace since the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, which sought to split the country into Jewish and Arab states (UN Security Council, 1967; 1973). Peace is still elusive despite these resolutions, mostly because powerful powers cannot agree. The United States has often supported Israel, while other member nations have backed Palestinian interests, producing political deadlock that hampers UN initiatives

(Bennis, 2015) ^[4]. This illustration shows how hard it is for the United Nations to get powerful countries with conflicting interests to cooperate.

Another difficult issue is the civil war in Syria. To address the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, the UN has adopted several strategies, such as UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which calls for a ceasefire and political transition (UN Security Council, 2015). Despite these efforts, the geopolitical power conflicts between Russia and the United States have constrained the United Nations' presence in Syria. Both power nations have obstructed successful peace building by using their veto power in the Security Council to oppose resolutions that do not suit their interests (Karlsruh, 2018) ^[20]. Furthermore, the UN's legal restrictions prohibit it from immediately engaging in Syria without the government's approval, which has limited access to peacekeeping and humanitarian aids. These issues reflect the structural challenges the UN faces when its efforts clash with the sovereignty of the nations involved.

Similarly, the protracted civil conflict in Yemen has presented the United Nations with numerous obstacles in its efforts to address the humanitarian and security situation. There has been little adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which called for a truce and a return to settlement negotiations (UN Security Council, 2015). Foreign operations have caused Yemen's conflict to worsen, with Saudi Arabia and Iran supporting opposing factions. Member states frequently failed to fulfil financial commitments, which limit the United Nations' ability to implement peace initiatives or give humanitarian relief, hence impeding its peace efforts (ICG, 2024). Furthermore, as peace initiatives must address both external pressures and deeply ingrained internal disputes, Yemen's intricate tribal and political differences make it challenging to put long-term solutions into practice.

Although it encounters many obstacles, the United Nations is essential in its efforts to arbitrate and settle disputes in the Middle East. The complexity of these conflicts, funding constraints, legal restrictions and disagreements among important member states make it difficult for the organisation to sustain World peace. These challenges have resulted in major setbacks in attaining enduring peace, as demonstrated in Syria, Yemen, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. As a result, even if the United Nations is still a crucial player in the region, both internal and external considerations usually limit its ability to sustain peace.

The United Nations has maintained a number of peacekeeping operations in the Middle East since 1948 in an effort to lessen hostilities, safeguard people, and aid peace initiatives. These missions have frequently encountered both noteworthy successes and major setbacks due to the region's complicated political and sectarian dynamics.

1. United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) – 1948

Established in 1948 to oversee truces and ceasefires between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the UNTSO was the first UN peacekeeping force. The fact that UNTSO is still in operation and supports other UN operations in the area with monitoring and mediation shows how persistent the Middle East war is (United Nations, 2023).

2. United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I and UNEF II) – 1956 and 1973

UNEF I was assigned to oversee the evacuation of international forces from Egypt and create a buffer between Egypt and Israel after the Suez Crisis. After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, UNEF II was designed to uphold Sinai Peninsula stability and enforce the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel. Even though both missions ended after accomplishing their goals, they demonstrated the initial difficulties of maintaining peace in the unstable region (Bellamy & Williams, 2021) ^[3].

3. United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights - 1974

In 1974, the UN Security Council created the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to oversee the ceasefire between Israel and Syria after the Yom Kippur War. Monitoring disengagement zones between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights and ensuring adherence to the ceasefire agreement are the mission's goals. Since UNDOF is a non-combatant mission with little power to directly intervene, its tactics are mostly observation and reporting.

There have been several challenges for UNDOF, especially because of the on-going civil conflict in Syria, which has put the mission's stability in jeopardy. The security dangers resulting from the spill over of violence from Syria have significant implications for UNDOF personnel, causing them to temporarily relocate and occasionally suspend operations (Parker, 2020) ^[32]. Furthermore, because of their on-going mistrust of one another, Syria and Israel have not cooperated very well, which has affected the mission. The task has become more complex because of the involvement of external countries, particularly the United States and Russia. Although it has had little effect on larger peace initiatives, UNDOF has been successful in averting significant clashes in the Golan Heights despite these obstacles.

4. United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) – 1978

Confirming Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and re-establishing peace and security in the region, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was founded in 1978 (UN Security Council, 1978). UNIFIL was given further authority after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war in Lebanon to oversee the truce, help the Lebanese government restore control of its territory, and stop hostile activities in southern Lebanon (UN Security Council, 2006). UNIFIL's goals were to uphold Lebanon's sovereignty, reduce hostilities, and enforce peace.

In its operations, UNIFIL has encountered many difficulties. Since Lebanon depends on UNIFIL to help keep the peace along its southern border, collaboration with local administrations has been essential. However, because Hezbollah functions independently of the Lebanese government, the existence of strong non-state players like the group has hindered UNIFIL's efforts to maintain stability. Other factors that have affected UNIFIL's mission dynamics include regional alliances and the participation of outside countries, particularly Iran's backing of Hezbollah and the United States' backing of Israel. Periodic clashes and limited cooperation with Hezbollah have impeded UNIFIL's ability to achieve durable peace, even though it has been successful in preventing a full-scale war since 2006 (Schenker and Orion, 2024) ^[34].

5. **United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) – 1988**

UNIIMOG's purpose was to oversee the truce between Iran and Iraq after their eight-year conflict. The mission's 1991 conclusion signalled the end of a brief calm that has since been impacted by regional conflicts, despite its success in facilitating the truce (Langholtz, 2018) ^[22].

6. **United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) – 1994**

UNSCO was created to monitor the socioeconomic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, coordinate development and humanitarian aid, and assist in negotiations for a durable peace between Israel and Palestine. Despite its contributions to peace initiatives, political barriers and ongoing conflict have reduced UNSCO's influence (United Nations, 2023).

7. **United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) – 2003**

UNAMI was created to support Iraq's democratic transition, advance human rights, and assist in reconstruction following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of the country. As evidence of the challenges of peace initiatives in dangerous areas, UNAMI has seen threats to its staff despite its non-military function as a result of the continued bloodshed in Iraq.

8. **United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) – 2012**

Deployed in 2012 to oversee the end of armed conflict in the early phases of the Syrian civil war, the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) was a brief operation (UN Security Council, 2012). UNSMIS sought to create a setting that would facilitate communication between the opposition groups and the Syrian government. However, as the violence increased, UNSMIS faced major obstacles in doing its mission.

The Syrian government and opposition groups' lack of cooperation was the main cause of UNSMIS's significant operational difficulties. Security threats, restricted access to war areas, and the quickly worsening situation on the ground all hampered the effort. Further complicating UNSMIS's mandate was the involvement of outside nations like the United States, which sponsored some opposition organisations, and Russia, which backed the Syrian government. These issues prevented UNSMIS from achieving its goals and ultimately led to its withdrawal after just a few months. The mission's failure brought to light the limitations of United Nations peacekeeping in extremely unstable situations where major powers' assistance and local actors' collaboration are lacking.

The United Nations and Challenges of Sustaining Peace in the Middle East

These case studies demonstrate the common difficulties faced by United Nations missions in the Middle East, which include a lack of collaboration, outside meddling, and intricate conflict dynamics. Regional alliances and the influence of outside countries with vested interests in the area made it difficult for missions to accomplish their goals. One of the primary challenges to United Nations peacekeeping in the Middle East is the deeply rooted political and regional tensions. For instance, missions like the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

(UNTSO) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) operate in areas where Israel's relationships with neighbouring states remain strained. These missions face constant pressure as any perceived bias can impact their legitimacy. The UN's role is often seen with suspicion by local governments, which complicates trust-building and cooperation (Bellamy & Williams, 2021) ^[3]. Political resistance has sometimes rendered these missions less effective, as they lack the full cooperation needed to fulfil their mandates.

Thus, the upheavals in the Middle East have brought attention to how important regional collaboration is to maintaining peace. UNIFIL's activities in Lebanon, for example, have shown how the participation or lack thereof of neighbouring nations may have a big influence on peacekeeping missions. The interests of Israel and Syria hindered UNDOF's work in the Golan Heights, demonstrating how tense regional ties can impede peacekeeping efforts (Mandell, 1996; ICG, 2024) ^[24]. With this experience, more robust regional partnerships and cooperative structures are essential for efficient peacekeeping.

The United Nations may find it advantageous to support and collaborate with regional coalitions and organisations that have a greater understanding of the political and cultural environments in other regions. Therefore, in regions where foreign engagement is frequently regarded with distrust, close collaboration with regional organisations may improve the acceptability and efficacy of peace missions. These collaborations can increase the likelihood of lasting peace by assisting the United Nations in implementing more politically and culturally appropriate solutions.

Also, many United Nations missions in the Middle East have faced budgetary constraints that limit their capacity to maintain peace. For example, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) operates in an area prone to violent flare-ups between Hezbollah and Israeli forces. While its mandate requires monitoring and peace enforcement, limited resources hindered its operational capabilities, often leaving it unable to address the rapid escalation of violence effectively. Budget limitations also affected troop deployment, logistics, and the technology necessary for surveillance and reporting (IPI, 2019). This financial shortfall undermined the mission's stability and long-term effectiveness.

Once more, the Middle East serves as a focal point for World powers, which makes United Nations peacekeeping missions more complicated. For example, the United States and Russia's engagement in the Syrian crisis affected continuing diplomatic negotiations as well as the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). The UN finds it challenging to mediate objectively since these outsider-actors frequently have conflicting interests. Additionally, when different factions receive assistance from influential allies, foreign influence frequently exacerbates local disputes, making it more difficult for the United Nations to carry out peacekeeping operations (Midfa, 2024) ^[27]. When the situation became out of hand, the United Nations suspends such missions, such as UNSMIS, due to the geopolitical complexity.

The United Nations has to take a more direct approach to addressing the influence of outside forces in conflict areas in the future. Creating plans to interact with strong nations to lessen their meddling in peacekeeping operations may

increase the effectiveness of United Nations initiatives. Furthermore, encouraging global accords on the exclusion of outside powers from UN-led peace initiatives would improve the conditions for real peace-building.

Furthermore, peacekeeper security becomes a major concern in areas where hostilities are ongoing. Particularly in states with severe violence like Syria and Iraq, United Nations personnel have been the targets of attacks, kidnappings, and harassment. For example, because of the continuous bloodshed by terrorist organisations, staff workers at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) were in constant danger of security breaches. The security threats compel missions to take a defensive stance, which limits the breadth of their activity and hinders their capacity to actively interact with local populations (Oxfam, 2003) ^[31]. In severe situations, like UNSMIS, the United Nations had to terminate the operation early because of escalating violence.

Additionally, the United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East frequently lack the power to impose peace, thus they must rely more on diplomatic pressure than on military might. Although they are required to observe and report, missions such as UNIFIL are not empowered to take forceful action. For example, missions like those in Syria and Lebanon have shown that peacekeepers cannot often disarm fighters or impose peace when conflicts increase (Hultman, Kathman & Shannon, 2014) ^[14]. Their inability to personally enforce ceasefire or stop violation diminishes their efficacy. Instead, they have to rely on member states to uphold agreements, which is difficult given how divisive politics are in the Middle East. The success of peacekeeping operations has been hampered by the inability to successfully de-escalate crises due to this lack of enforcement authority.

The United Nations needs to think about more flexible methods for future peacekeeping plans that provide peacekeepers more power to take decisive action in areas of violence. Flexible mandates could lessen the deadlock that arises when the United Nations' activities are constrained by weak enforcement capabilities, particularly in areas where conflicts are still raging. The United Nations may create more feasible, realistic missions that support long-term stability by recognising these constraints.

The lessons learnt in the Middle East have wider ramifications for how the UN handles peacekeeping around the globe. The difficulties in attaining durable results in the area point to the necessity for the UN to update its post-war recovery, peace enforcement, and conflict resolution policies (Duursma *et al.*, 2023) ^[9]. First, a review of the United Nations' post-conflict reconstruction strategy would be beneficial. The lack of extensive reconstruction initiatives has occasionally permitted instability to reemerge in the Middle East. Preventing future conflicts may be possible if peacekeeping operations involve strong support for social and economic reconstruction (ISE, 2019).

These examples also highlighted how the United Nations' peacekeeping system must address the root causes of violence, including resource competitiveness, political grievances and ideological differences. The United Nations can move closer to more lasting peace outcomes and lessen the chance of conflict reoccurring by addressing these problems.

The Middle East experience of the United Nations has demonstrated that conventional peacekeeping strategies

might not work in every area. Conflict zones that face comparable obstacles, such as foreign power dynamics and governmental disintegration, could need more adaptable tactics. Instead of directly intervening in these places, the United Nations may think about using diplomatic engagement and mediation as its main strategies, reserving peacekeeping personnel for observation and reporting (Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård, 2019 ^[13]; Duursma *et al.*, 2023) ^[9]. Without sacrificing neutrality or raising tensions, this change would enable the UN to function more successfully in politically delicate areas.

Overall, the lessons from the crises in the Middle East show that the United Nations needs to modify its peacekeeping tactics to fit the particular circumstances of each conflict. Understanding the effects of outside influences, encouraging regional collaboration, and giving priority to flexible frameworks are ways the United Nations may improve its strategy for maintaining international peace.

Conclusion

The maintenance and sustainability of international peace has been a difficult task for the United Nations, especially in conflict prone regions like the Middle East where national interests, power struggles, and outsider-influences usually make peacekeeping difficult.

The assessment of UNIFIL, UNDOF, and peace initiatives in Syria, among other United Nations missions in the region showed the strategic importance of United Nations' action in high-conflict areas, but also its limitations. These cases made it clear that for the United Nations to adjust to changing situations, it needs to bolster cooperation with regional partners, secure a steady budget, and expand its enforcement capabilities. Long-term changes are also required for the organisation to solve persistent problems in peacekeeping, like better member-state coordination and accountability. By implementing these suggestions, the United Nations can improve its ability to uphold peace in the Middle East and other areas dealing with comparable volatility, which will ultimately lead to a more robust international peacekeeping system.

The difficulties encountered by United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Middle East highlighted important areas in need of development. To improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, the United Nations needs to address issues such as a lack of coordination, uneven resourcing, and restricted enforcement authority. This paper makes suggestions for bolstering United Nations peacekeeping efforts and improving the agency's crisis response capabilities and these are:

1. Strengthening Enforcement Mechanisms

The absence of enforcement authority is one of the primary drawbacks of UN peacekeeping. However, if they are acting in self-defence and protection of the mission, they may employ tactical force with the Security Council's approval. The mandates of peacekeepers in unstable areas, such as the Middle East, frequently limit their capacity to take the essential steps to preserve stability. The United Nations should think about enhancing the mandates of peacekeeping operations in regions with high levels of conflict to solve this, granting peacekeepers more power to impose peace when necessary (Tuvdendarjaa, 2022) ^[36]. Allowing peacekeepers to act more forcefully in situations involving violence or ceasefire agreement violations may be one aspect of this strategy.

To prevent overreach and preserve civilian lives, a more robust mandate would also necessitate more precise rules for the use of force. By developing enforcement policies tailored to each mission, the United Nations may successfully accomplish its goals without coming across as an occupying force by striking a balance between peacekeeping and respect for national sovereignty.

2. Increasing Financial Support for Peacekeeping

Another major barrier to UN peacekeeping operations is a lack of funding. Underfunding limits the resources, manpower, and equipment available for many United Nations' activities (Coleman and Nyblade, 2018) ^[8]. Member states should create a more uniform finance system for peacekeeping operations, with contributions based on each nation's financial capability, to increase financial assistance (IPI, 2019). This would guarantee that missions in high-risk regions receive sufficient funding without depending on voluntary contributions that could change according to political factors.

Establishing a special peacekeeping fund to which member nations can make regular contributions is an additional strategy. Better planning and execution would be possible for missions with a more secure financial base thanks to this fund. Increased financing would help with day-to-day operations as well as the deployment of cutting-edge tools and training, all of which are essential for efficient peacekeeping in challenging situations.

3. Enhancing Collaboration with Regional Organizations

Effective peacekeeping requires cooperation with regional organisations, particularly in regions where local expertise and clout are crucial. For instance, regional coalitions or groups such as the Arab League might assist United Nations operations in the Middle East by offering knowledge of regionally specific cultural, political, and socioeconomic aspects (UN, 2023). More cooperation with these organisations would strengthen local support for peacekeeping operations and increase the United Nations' situational knowledge.

To guarantee that regional and international goals of sustainable peace are in line, the United Nations should also create cooperative planning frameworks with regional organisations. Joint training exercises and information-sharing procedures may be part of this collaboration, which would equip peacekeepers to function more efficiently. The United Nations can increase the credibility and efficacy of its peacekeeping operations by collaborating with regional organisations.

4. Strengthening Diplomatic Measures

Successful United Nations peacekeeping depends on diplomatic involvement. Complex relationships and outside forces have an impact on many Middle Eastern crises, which can impede efforts at peace. The organization should give diplomatic channels top priority both before and during peacekeeping missions in order to address this (Nathan *et al.*, 2018) ^[29]. Actively interacting with powerful nations could lessen outside intervention and improve the climate for peace.

The United Nations may also think about sending special envoys to conflict areas who are solely responsible for cultivating connections with important parties. To stop an

escalation, these envoys could cooperate with regional leaders and settle disputes between disputing parties. The organization can lessen barriers to stability and foster conditions that support peacekeeping by stepping up diplomatic efforts.

5. Improving Coordination and Accountability among Member States

Another obstacle to efficient peacekeeping is a lack of coordination among United Nations member nations. Disagreements over peacekeeping missions and tactics can result from divergent political interests and agendas among nations. By creating more transparent channels of communication and decision-making procedures that foster cooperation among member nations, the United Nations could address this issue.

Enhancing responsibility is also crucial. There are accusations of wrongdoing or corruption against certain peacekeeping missions, which damages their legitimacy and efficacy. To guarantee that peacekeepers follow moral principles and operational directives, the United Nations should put in place stringent accountability procedures. Frequent assessments and open reporting of peacekeeping operations can aid in resolving these problems and fostering confidence among host nations and local communities.

6. Adopting Long-Term Reforms Based on Middle Eastern Crises

The United Nations' Middle East experiences showed that its peacekeeping strategy needs long-term changes. Making post-conflict reconstruction a regular part of peacekeeping operations is one such reform. The absence of thorough reconstruction initiatives in the Middle East has frequently resulted in resurgent hostilities. By tackling the underlying causes of violence, post-conflict reconstruction could aid in preventing the resumption of hostilities.

Developing adaptable peacekeeping models that enable missions to adjust to shifting conditions on the ground is another change. This flexibility would make missions more effective in complex contexts by ensuring they are ready to handle unforeseen obstacles. By learning from past missions in the Middle East, the United Nations can develop more effective peacekeeping policies that are applicable in other regions facing similar issues.

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