70 YEARS of the United Nations | Successes, Failures and Way Forward

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* Peacekeeping and Prosecutions of Charles Taylor and Slobodan Milosevic
* Checking Nuclear Arms Proliferation
* Services in Economic and Social Sector
* Provision of succor and relief in times of crises
* Efforts for fighting Poverty and Hunger
* Initiatives against Gender/ Domestic violence and Child Abuse; Empowering women
* Help to Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
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“The United Nations is not but a fashion house whichconceals the ugly realities What has the United Nations done so far? It has failed miserably, shamefully I know of the farce and the fraud of the United Nations You come here and say, ‘Excellence, Excellence, comment allez-vous?’ and all that,” maintained Zulifkar Ali Bhutto, the ninth premier of Pakistan, in a speech addressed at the UN Security Council The United Nations (U N), comprised of 193 countries, came into being from the debris of the bloodiest WW2, on October 24th, 1945, to save the succeeding generations from the curse of war, and for the world cooperation in different sectors The U N O that, unlike its predecessor, the League of Nations which vanished in a puff of smoke, has successfully endured the moments of ups and downs, and successes and failures, marked its seventieth anniversary last month There is no denying the fact that the United Nations Organization, notwithstanding its ineffectiveness and impotence, and a ‘total fiasco’, it has proved to be, in most cases, still serves as the sole international forum, and the only agency, which has thwarted the eventuality of the ‘Third World War’, and guarded the humanity against the possible ruination, in an age in which the minor scuffles among the big powers can possibly escalate into a full-fledged nuclear war, subsequently bringing the humanity on the verge of extinction However, in view of its unrealized charter, and the tall pledges of promoting world peace, reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, maintaining dignity and equal rights among the states whether large or small, and providing for a humane standard of life in the depressed regions, the U N, so to speak, appears but a lip-service payer

Having said that, amidst the changing dynamics of the world, characterized by power politics based on the realist paradigm, and in view of the increasing complex interdependence, globalization, rise of the new forces of the non-state actors, and intricate socio-economic fabric of changing societies, the U N with its varied organs, has to its credit some of the crowning achievements of enabling the weaker states to have their ‘say’ however ineffective, on the international fora, initiating reforms in socio-economic and cultural realms, and of making democratization a popular theme As a matter of fact, while denouncing it, the question, one is faced with, is ‘what should substitute for it in case of its termination in the complex world scenario?’ Even those counting it as nothing more than an unnecessary evil, one way or the other, concede its playing a role indispensable to the modern age

Thanks to the United Nations, the eruption of the Third World War, which on certain occasions in the past, seemed drawing at hand, has been averted, and resultantly the world has been saved from the onslaught of devastation and sufferings witnessed during the World Wars 1 and 2 Even during the moments of the heightened tensions, as for example, the Cuban Missile Crisis October 1962 when the Cold War was about to be turned into an armed conflict between the U S, and the U S S R, the U N’s presence was but a blessing for the mankind, that, as per a survey by an American Research institute, otherwise would have witnessed hundreds of millions people perished

Amid the self-aggrandizing so-called super powers, the sovereign and territorial integrity of the smaller and weaker states would have been a pipe dream had there not been an international body of the nations The vulnerable states would have been an easy prey, and susceptible to the aggressive designs of the powerful ones; the world, therefore, would be turned into a global empire, characterized by anarchy, and the law of the jungle based on ‘might is right’ The U N, as Dag Hammarskjold remarked, was created to save mankind from hell, from misery, and from lawlessness

Peace has settled in following the carnage of the World War 2, in part, only thanks to the U N, because the latter vigilantly checks the aggression of the states; besides adopting conflict resolution measures and peacekeeping initiatives It is a prima facie that the number of causalities in conflicts, with certain exceptions however, has declined steeply since 1945 Another good precedent established by the U N is when the Serbian and Liberian leaders were charged in trial tribunals set up by the former, with committing war crimes

Though it remains debatable as to ‘to what extent the U N has succeeded in checking the nuclear arms proliferation in the face of the fact that the arms race is, as always, on rise, albeit with the varying nature and scope, the U N O has fared well in its effort to obligate the nations to give up the their nuclear programs Many a state has voluntarily given up its bomb and nuclear research program, South Africa for example, submitting to the U N’s international Atomic Energy Agency

As far as the refugee crisis is concerned, grappling with the Brobdingnagian expatriation crisis has always been a matter of a concern for the UN, which, frankly speaking, under its ‘UN High Commissioner on Refugees’ has gone a long way in alleviating the sufferings of the asylum seekers and refugees However, right now, it has a corroding crisis of refugees numbering over millions, fleeing Syria in conflict, to deal with

Apart from the successes enumerated above, its role in empowering the victimized women and protecting the children from the scourge of child abuse in every nook and corner of the world including Pakistan esp its rural areas, is indeed very remarkable The value-oriented seminars and campaigns initiated under its patronage, in far flung areas of Pakistan and everywhere in the third world, so to build a popular opinion against the diabolic stereotypes of deeming women a second class human, have triggered a significant change to that effect The menace of ‘Honor Killing’ prevalent in the hinterlands of Sindh and Punjab, for example, has met a popular condemnation as a result of painstaking campaigns launched under the various NGO’s and INGO’s associated with the UN

Moreover, the steps taken by the U N under its numerous organs for providing for succor and food assistance or otherwise in times of crisis, such as famine, war, civil unrest, etc are worthwhile The huge supply of food and other dietary items to the victims during and in the wake of the flood 2010 in Pakistan is a good case in point Likewise, a number of INGO’s committed to the recovery process in the year following the large scale destruction by floods in Pakistan, had their affiliation with the UN

While one may be fascinated by the outer appearance of the UN, its charter of long provisions and pledges, and vows of doing such and such, a cursory look at it, its organization, and its role so far in toto, may best expose the superficiality and futility of the United Nations That is too much of the irony that the organization not democratic in itself, bangs on about democratization right along In fact, the U N has miserably failed to measure up to the democratic and popular aspirations So to put it unexaggeratedly, the U N has been rendered to a fiefdom, held hostage by a few so-called super powers, the US, for example, to their own advantage just under the façade of the tag ‘ United Nations’

The Most important one, the UNO Security Council, in the very nature of the beast, is outright failure of the UN Since it is dominated by the five permanent members, viz , the USA, UK, Russia, China and France, that are always given to exercise the ‘Veto’ whenever the circumstances arise, the rest members are rendered handicapped Even if the rest fourteen members may be willing to adopt a resolution, one member can veto and beat their overwhelming support

It is noteworthy here that at the outlet of the UN, the USA was the only nuclear power, but since then the nuclear race has been going on unabated, and too many others are up to develop their nuclear program Following America, the USSR developed its nuclear weapons in 1949, which was later followed by UK in 1954, France in 1960, China 1964, and India in 1974 Israel in its own right is an undeclared nuclear power

The U S seizing on its being the chief donor to the U N has always acted single-handedly, flagrantly breaching the charter of the UN with impunity while the UN with its tacit sanction to the legalization of its illegal actions remains a spectator The United Nations’ brazen failure can be gauged from the US brutish invasion to Iraq on the flimsy pretext that the latter possessed the weapons of mass destruction even if the UN’s Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission had dismissed the presence of any such weapons with Iraq Yet, the US stood impervious to the Charter, and rulings of the United Nations while intruding on the sovereign territorial integrity of smaller states Invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR and US, Vietnam War, and Korean War, etc are stark failures of the UN

One of the most outright failures of the UN in terms of peaceful settlement of the international disputes is Palestine Issue which is still hanging fire despite the nature of the conflict, and loss of the lives and assets it has entailed on and off The Israel-Palestine conflict longer than the UN itself came at a turning point when the UN instead of adhering to its principle of ‘self-determination’ played in the hands of the so-called powers, dividing the state of Palestine into two parts, and very shamefully giving away 55 % Palestine to the Zionist Israel state despite the Zionists/ Jews constituting only 30% of the total population As per the statistics provided by the UN itself, the death toll between July and August this year, has risen to 2104 in Gaza, with 66 Israeli causalities only Except for a few tenuous resolutions making the headlines in the press, with Mr Ban Ki Moon, dressed up in 3 piece suits, paying the same lip-service, what concrete steps has the UN taken so far to halt the genocide unleashed by the wolves of Israel? Certainly naught

Yet another historic debacle of the UN is its impotence to negotiate an amicable settlement of the Kashmir issue, with the unbridled Indian aggression in the region on rise If one takes a closer view of the scenario in Kashmir which, the most militarized zone, has witnessed an unprecedented savagery, with rapes, forced disappearances, deaths, and tortures have turned out to be the order of the day Regardless of 23 UN Resolutions, calling for an impartial plebiscite, the Kashmir issue persists to be a Damocles’ sword hanging over the heads of two nuclear powers, as well as the entire region

Concerning the counter terrorism strategy of the UN since 9/11, the fact remains that the latter itself, so to speak, has sown the field with dragon’s teeth; co-opted by America, whose misconceived and self-serving policies have harbored terrorists, the UNO outlawed and chased a few terrorist outfits, to the exclusion of many, especially the countries that have long served as the breeding grounds for terrorism The rise of ISIS, and Syrian Crisis are but failures of the body

The scandal of the UN peacekeepers paying girls and women they were supposed to protect , and even raping in some reported cases in Congo, casts a slur on the whole of the UN In addition, though substantial progress has been made in coping with the environmental issues, the problem remains a burning issue to be addressed To put in few words, its security council seems crippled to provide for security; its health organ is given to AIDS; and its peacekeepers and welfare activists are disposed to rapes, sexual abuse, and what not

Taking stock of overall pros and cons, and successes and failures, one may feel impelled to say with a certain degree of conviction, as already contended, that since it is 21st century world divided into a number of sovereign national states, not the medieval princely kingdoms, and the nature of the world has grown so complex and interdependent that it cannot do without an international forum like the UN, without deadly wars, and anarchy as a consequence In a word, it is Hobson’s choice The question arises as to ‘what then should be the mechanic to do away with its flaws and weak points while maximizing its efficiency and effectiveness to the maximum?’ The way forward as suggested to by a number of renowned political scientists, pundits of international relations, and diplomats is the dire need of a major overhaul of the UN

It is worth pointing out the various schools of thought about its reformation The camp of democrats strives for a more democratic UN, reformed on democratic lines, whereas the technocrats insist on efficiency, productivity, and accountability Idealists advance their reform agenda of empowering the body with all the more powers, thereby clipping the state sovereignty Contrary to it, the realists are for the maximum state activity, national interest and power

Reforming the Security Council on a priority basis is what needs to be carried out forthwith, by enlarging its members to the total membership, by fixing a term of 2 to 3 years It will help it take decisions, without being vetoed, in the larger interests of the world community Further, it will also establish a relative balance of power in it

Equally crucial is constituting an ‘executive’ machinery, as right now, there is no such body to execute with an iron hand, the UN’s policies and agendas Different crimes including terrorism, happen to be the direct corollary of poverty Eradication of poverty needs to be the first priority of the organization

The ‘Merit’ needs to flourish, as the top slots, according to Munir Akram, Pakistan’s former representative in the UN, are held by the white The corruption, and such malpractices are rampant in its ‘Secretariat’, and in international bureaucracy, which all must be curbed

 The point to cherish is that it has successfully completed its 70 years, sans falling apart like the League of Nations Willy or nilly, it must be acknowledged that the UN continues to be a ray of hope for the marginalized ones Everything has a life circle, and so has the UN, therefore, it is by reforming the mammoth organization that it will reemerge as an effective, efficient and coherent body