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Period 2 Global Perspectives
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Unit 2 United Nations & Global Security Essay

To what extent is the United Nations successful as a collective security agent?

The United Nations has failed considerably at its mission to establish and maintain a status of 'collective security agent,' because conflicts and alliances between member nations prevent actions from being approved, strict rules limit the capabilities of the UN and its troops, and UN peacekeepers have spread disease and raped civilians in conflicted areas. However, one may concede that the United Nations has achieved this title, because the UN continues to provide assistance in areas of unrest, and the organisation meets at regular intervals to discuss important global concerns.

Conflicts, concerns, and alliances between member nations of the UN prevent the organisation from acting for the purpose of maintaining global security, and in some cases, the power of the UN Security Council may be used for the personal gains of member nations. Recently, Russia and the Democratic Republic of China vetoed the UN proposal to instate military action against the current Syrian regime, and this plan was supported by Western nations, such as the United States, who is an adversary of communist Russia and China. One may presume that conflict between the democratic and communist nations encouraged the veto, but this is not definitively stated. (Haass, 2012) Richard N. Haass (2012), a reporter for the Arabic news service *Aljazeera*, argues that Russia and China fear that their involvement in what they perceive as the domestic concerns of Syria, especially affairs that involve the revolt of people against a government, will set precedents that will trigger unrest within their national borders and invite international involvement. Considering that *Aljazeera* is a news source, one must question whether the chief of the news service has a predisposed opinion that is being reflected in the content of its published articles, which may negatively affect the reliability of this source's information, especially since the article is primarily composed of postulations and predictions. However, the credibility of Haass is improved by his position as president of the American Council of Foreign relations, since he may be well versed in international conflicts, which adds validity to his arguments.

Divisions of opinions and the formation of alliances in the UN Security Council were especially strong during the times of the Cold War, and the conflicting views of the United States and the then Soviet Union, and the resulting forces that supported each, paralyzed the Council. With military action restricted by the veto power and the decisive restraint of select member nations, resolutions were enacted, some of which were used to place pressure upon rivals. In the 1970s, Arab member nations supported a resolution that established Zionism, which is the development of a predominately Jewish area, as a form of racism, for they sought to further separate Israel from the international community and could do so by utilizing the power presented by UN membership. (The united nations, 2012)

The textbook chapter titled *The United Nations*, which is the source of the above information, expresses obvious disapproval of the United Nations, so one must question whether the provided information was manipulated or presented in a way to lend itself towards supporting one perspective. However, the chapter provides statistics, well structured reasons, and multiple examples to support any

claims, and this substantial evidence shows the validity of the information. Undoubtedly, the conflicts and alliances between UN member nations, which may harbor personal goals, likely impede attempts of the UN to establish itself as a collective security agency.

An additional perspective is that the UN Security Council and UN troops must abide by strict rules, thus limiting the power and action of the United Nations as a collective security agent. The Council is restricted by the veto power, in which a proposal must be unanimously agreed upon by all five of the permanent member nations. Due to conflicts of interest and opinion, few UN propositions come to fruition. Additionally, the United Nations may only be present in a nation if properly given consent, and UN peacekeepers may not intervene or take sides in any conflicted situation. (The united nations, 2012)

Recently, the vetoes of permanent Security Council members Russia and China halted UN involvement in the Syrian civil war, thus exposing Syria and Turkey to further conflict. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister of Turkey, claims that the exclusion of countries from permanent UN Security Council membership hinders the United Nations in its ability to be aware and responsive to the needs of the global community, and he states that any version of the veto will prevent the UN from dutifully acting in times of crisis. Prime Minister Erdogan further suggests that a system of majority voting should instead be instated. (Reforming the un, 2012)

While the *Irish Times*, the source in which Prime Minister Erdogan's claim is published, is a reputable news organization, the lack of author attribution limits the reliability of the information contained within the article. His claim is in particular response to the veto that is of detriment to the people of Syria and Turkey, and as he holds a prominent position in a country that will personally be affected by this decision, one must presume that his judgment on the system of the UN has been influenced, therefore decreasing his credibility as a source. However, the credibility of the Prime Minister Erdogan is increased by his status as a Prime Minister, since with this title it is likely that he is frequently exposed to issues of national and global importance, and such wisdom and experience ultimately adds validity to his statements. Consequently, restrictions set by the United Nations preclude attempts of the organisation at being a collective security agent.

Additionally, peacekeepers of the UN have spread disease and participated in unwarranted sexual acts with civilians while working in conflicted regions, so one could argue that the UN has failed at its mission of being a collective security agent. In 2010, cholera, which is a highly infectious disease that affects the small intestine, was brought to Haiti by peacekeeping troops from Nepal, and evidence suggests that a central Haitian river was contaminated with cholera, thereby causing the deaths of more than 7,050 Haitians and the sickness of more than 531,000 others. (Sontag, 2012)

In 2007, 114 Sri Lankan peacekeepers, who were stationed in Haiti to maintain peace and security while Haiti established secure sovereignty, were exported from the country after being charged with participating in sexual acts with women and young girls, who would receive money or food as compensation. (Williams, 2007). UN peacekeepers in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have also been accused of such sexual acts. (PK. Balachandran, 2007)

From the information provided by the two sources identified above, it may be inferred that the criteria and standards used to select and train peacekeepers is too low, and therefore the quality of the aid offered by the peacekeepers is compromised. One may therefore conclude that ethics training should be instated. (PK. Balachandran, 2007) Unmistakably, the fact that UN troops have transmitted disease and engaged in sexual activities with women and girls while on peacekeeping missions stops the UN from functioning properly to maintain global security.

An alternate perspective is that the United Nations continues to provide peacekeepers and offer assistance in volatile situations, therefore allowing the UN to sufficiently function as a collective security agent. Eight UN peacekeeping missions in Africa have encouraged peace, such as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which has maintained peace since 2000, primarily due to the aid of peacekeepers. (Consolidating peace and international security and helping to establish conditions for development, 2012)

When the conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the government of Sudan was identified as a risk to international security, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan was established in 2005, to ensure the cessation of war and allow the formation of South Sudan, and the support of the UN was later extended to guarantee the abatement of any additional threats. (Unmis closes as south sudan becomes world's newest country, 2012)

It may be deduced that the formation of a new nation or the resolution of conflicts is more likely to occur with the assistance of a third-party participant who may instill organization despite the chaos, and this role was fulfilled by the UN. However, the extent of the aid provided by the UN was not identified by the above sources, nor do the sources' make note of any additional organisations that supplied support. Additionally, this information was retrieved from the web pages of the United Nations, and although the organisation is credible, the reliability of the information is questionable, since the UN may carefully present select information in a way that is partial towards their cause. However, one may still consider the support provided by the United Nations and its peacekeepers as adequate information to support the perception that the United Nations is successful at maintaining global security.

The United Nations Security Council has the ability to meet regularly to discuss issues that affect global security, and this fact may be used to support the perspective that the UN is an established agent of collective security. Since the beginning of 2012, the UN Security Council has convened on 106 separate days to discuss approximately 165 different issues, and over 80 resolutions have either been proposed or enacted. (Department of Public Information & Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2012) Due to regular meetings, the UN is likely able to facilitate cooperation of nations and encourage the free flow of information and global opinions that are necessary to limit and eradicate problematic situations. However, it is difficult to infer from the above information the true productivity of the United Nations during these meetings, so one cannot argue the overall benefit of regular conferences. The information is statistical and from the records of the United Nations, which is a reputable organization, so it may be conceded that the UN's regular discussion of issues of global importance supports the view that the UN functions properly as a collective security agent.

In the final analysis, the United Nations is predominately unsuccessful at maintaining global security as a collective security agent. Conflicts and alliances between member nations prevent UN plans from being approved, strict rules limit the capabilities of the UN and its troops, and UN peacekeepers have spread disease and raped civilians in conflicted areas. However, one may concede that the United Nations has achieved this title, because the UN continues to provide assistance in areas of unrest, and the organisation meets at regular intervals to discuss important global concerns.

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