

United Nations Structural Reform

Sorour Abdul Razzaq Al-Saadi, Mostafa Fazaeli

PhD Candidate at the University of Qom

rrw095@gmail.com

Professor of International Law, University of Qom

m.fazayeli@qom.ac.ir

Abstract

The events and incidents of the last several decades, especially after the end of the Cold War, indicate the inefficiency of the United Nations system in fulfilling its mission of maintaining international peace and security. This challenge has raised the issue of reforming the structure of the United Nations and has made it a necessity in the eyes of many experts. The study of the necessity of reforming the structure of the United Nations system, especially by focusing on the two main pillars of this organization, namely the General Assembly and the Security Council, is the focus of the present study. This article discusses and examines this issue in two parts. The first part examines the voting system and functions of the Security Council and focuses on issues related to the veto power and unbalanced representation of developing countries in this institution. The second requirement mentioned in this section refers to the need to reform the structure and method of applying Security Council sanctions in order to find a solution to ensure that they serve justice and efficiency, rather than the political use of punitive measures. But in the second part of the article, which is about reforming the structure and functioning of the General Assembly, the first requirement highlights the necessity and necessity of restoring its status and strengthening its authority as an inclusive representative body of the United Nations members. The second requirement concerns the interrelationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, in which von der Donck argues that we must strive to rebalance these two pillars in order to strengthen their legitimacy in an international order that has changed significantly since 1945.

Keywords: UN Reform; UNSC; Veto Power; Sanctions Regime, GA, International Justice.

Introduction

The issue of reforming the structure of the United Nations was considered one of the most difficult, and perhaps the most difficult and sensitive, issues of the United Nations system. The reason is that it seeks to go to the heart of how power is distributed in the international system and to review the order that the world has inherited since 1945. This structure, founded after the Second World War, does not correspond to today's realities and is therefore unable to guarantee global peace and security in the twenty-first century. The differences in the institutions of the United Nations, especially between the General Assembly and the Security Council, between permanent and non-permanent members, create an imbalance between member states and weaken the effectiveness of the organization. The occurrence of numerous international and non-international armed conflicts in recent decades and the prevalence of security incidents such as the spread of the phenomenon of international terrorism, bring to mind an image of the United Nations that is reminiscent of the caricature of the League of Nations in front of the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva in the early months of the Second World War. Therefore, the need to restructure the structure of the United Nations system and establish a new order based on the reform of the power relationship in response to global geopolitical developments is clearly felt.

In an era when the world is moving not only to abandon the order based on legal norms, but also when the actions of some major powers indicate a lack of belief in and commitment to any principle or rule, how can one continue to cling to the structure and organization and hope that its main actors are the ones who implement the fundamental principles, standards, and rules of the existing system?

However, the puzzle is that any reform of the existing structure must go through mechanisms initiated by the same powers that enjoy a privileged position and a decisive role in the decision-making of the existing structure. To put it more clearly, any reform of the structure that requires a change in the superior position and privileged role of the permanent member powers of the Security Council is subject to the consent of these powers themselves. And this means that the legal path towards any reform of the structure will lead to a dead end.

Therefore, it does not seem possible to have much hope for meaningful and effective reforms in the existing structure using conventional legal and peaceful solutions. However, despite this, we should not give up on our efforts, but rather it is up to the scientific, political and legal elites to turn the issue of the necessity of fundamental structural reforms into a public discourse and a global demand, so that perhaps the majority of the

world's governments, relying on such a demand, will try to force the great powers to comply with structural changes in order to move closer to an order based on a relatively just and fair structure. Hopefully, steps will be taken in this area through scientific and legal research.

Research Problem

The main issue of the present study is how to transform the United Nations with a new structure. The sub-questions under the main research issue, in light of what was mentioned in the introduction, will include the following two questions:

First: How can the International Security Council be reformed?

Second: How can the United Nations General Assembly be reformed?

Significance of the Study:

The importance of the present study stems from the fact that it seeks to address an issue that helps highlight one of the most urgent questions facing the world order in the present day, namely reforming the United Nations in the direction of moving towards justice, equitable representation, and the like. This study can make a small contribution to the academic debate on ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations in fulfilling its mission of maintaining international peace and security, as well as human security and human rights, and it tries to provide practical recommendations for reforming its institutions, especially the Security Council and the General Assembly. and enables the research community and policymakers to assess the practical implications of such reforms in light of current political and legal challenges.

Study Structure

To deal with the above problem, this work will be looked into in two parts:

- 1) Reform in the International Security Council
- 2) Reform of the United Nations General Assembly

Section One

Reform of the International Security Council

The disappointing performance of the United Nations Security Council as the only body with the authority to make binding and coercive decisions in the field of international peace and security has demonstrated the need for a fundamental review and reform of the structure of this body more than any other organ. As far as it can be said, reform of the Security Council is considered an essential element in restoring confidence in the United Nations in a way that will enable it to succeed in playing its historic role in ensuring global peace and security and administering justice. Without such reform, the organization will certainly continue to be hostage to the interests of the great powers and its legitimacy will be weakened in the eyes of the public opinion of the world and countries that are increasingly demanding a more just and equitable international system.¹

In this regard, two fundamental changes are mainly necessary:

First: Reform of the structure and working procedures of the International Security Council in a way that reflects the existing geopolitical realities of the world and is capable of defining and implementing relatively democratic international decision-making processes.

Second: Reviewing the mechanism of the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council against some countries in a way that is fully in line with the humanitarian goals and ideals of the United Nations.

In line with the structural reforms of the Security Council, the number and composition of its members and the decision-making system on the one hand, and the operational techniques and methods of implementing strategies and decisions on the other hand, should be changed and organized in a way that, unlike what the world has witnessed so far, will fulfill the goals and ideals of the United Nations in line with the principles and

¹ One of the situations that clearly demonstrates the political and unjust nature of the functioning of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly and the Security Council, is related to the Palestinian issue. Since the early years of the formation of the United Nations, when the Palestinian issue was placed on the agenda of this organization, the functioning of this organization, whether by the General Assembly or the Security Council, has been contrary to the principles and objectives of the United Nations, and instead of helping the Palestinian people exercise their right to self-determination, has led to the consolidation and strengthening of the Zionist occupation and apartheid regime. For more information on this subject, see: Ziaee, S.Y. (2025). All of Palestine for the Inhabitants of Palestine: The Legal Consequences of the Internationally Wrongful Act in the Establishment of Israel, *Iranian Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 3(1), pp: 48-71.

values reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. And lead to the re-creation of public international hope and trust in the organization.

The voting procedure and system and the methods of operationalizing decisions should be the main objectives in reforming the United Nations Security Council. Decisions and measures taken in relation to situations threatening or breaching international peace and security, particularly during wars, with the aim of ending them or halting their further development or even, in special cases, preventing their occurrence, and their nature depends on the powers conferred on the International Security Council under the Charter of the United Nations.

One: Peaceful Settlement The UN Charter requires member states to resolve international disputes through other peaceful means by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and resort to regional agency or arrangements. The Security Council has the power to investigate any dispute or situation it considers of international concern which is likely to endanger the maintenance of peace, and decide whether its continuation is pursuant to maintaining world peace. In such cases, it may suggest to the parties procedures or methods of adjustment which can be considered at any time during the dispute. While some publicists have been inclined to treat Article 34 of the Charter as a ground for action by the United Nations in relation to non-international armed conflicts,² there is controversy as to whether it is open to the Security Council to act regardless when behind a non-international armed conflict. The reality is that the act of the Council, who recommends to parties to non-international armed conflict to find solution through some way may be a kind of intervention into internal affairs in state affected by the war.

Second: International Sanctions; one of the most important mechanisms of action is the measures adopted by United Nations according to its Charter (art.41). The forms in which these measures has been punishable have ranged, and the most well-known are international economic sanctions. The reasons for the necessity to apply them were also manifold and non-international armed conflicts had contributed thereto. And also, the Council viewed that a specific commodity or material is important in fueling a certain conflict as STATE, such as some NATURAL RESOURCES if it was in the LIBERIA's case. The Council connected its effort at addressing the non-international armed conflict in that country with an attempt to address the situation of conflict throughout West Africa. In resolution no (1478) it appealed to all States to prevent the import of all rough timber and wood products from Liberia. With regard to Iraq, in the decade 1990-2000 several resolutions were adopted by the Security Council establishing embargo and imposing economic sanctions on Iraq for reasons provided beyond one's ability to understand, destroying all of Iraq's weaponry, then the "Oil for Food" resolution in an attempt to mitigate some effects of this embargo on Iraqi people. It became about the post-international coalition invasion of Iraq and the end of the embargo and sanctions, it wasn't any more so much as decisions about it. Regarding the Syrian issue cum international sanctions on Syria, a brief scan of relevant resolutions showed that the Security Council planned to vote on adopting a resolution to add (11) Syrian military leaders and officials to its blacklist over chemical weapons attacks. It also aimed to prohibit the sale or supply of helicopters to the Syrian government, and blacklist 10 more people and entities linked to the government for their roles in the development and production of chemical weapons and missiles carrying them down, freezing assets as well as banning travel for individuals and entities to all UN Member States.

3: United Nations International Forces In the view of the international forces are regarded as one of the most significant ways that have been adopted by the United Nations to address non-international armed conflicts. This is because they differ in the character, functions, and legal grounds for their creation. These forces perform a range of functions from peacekeeping to peace enforcement and peacebuilding.

Peacekeeping operations: These are among the provisional measures which, according to article 40 of the UN Charter, may be specified by the Security Council without prejudice to the rights, claims or position of the parties concerned. Their aim is to avoid making the situation worse, and they may assume different forms: in any case there are no limits placed on the Council provided that it does not prejudice rights or legal positions of those involved in a conflict. The measures discussed by this article as examples are: to demilitarize (tools, plans, zones), to agree on a ceasefire or peace cease with corresponding political content and sending peacekeeping forces.

Peace enforcement operations: The term peace enforcement normally refers to a range of actions the Security Council may take in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter as contained therein, forceful or non-forceful. The steps envisaged by this concept are basically those of coercion, taken against the will of the state affected. The powers are exercised in the face of a threat to, or breach of, international peace and security under Article 39 of the UN Charter. Then the UN forces cease to be neutral combatant separators.

Accordingly, objectives and assignments of UN forces as one major instrument to address non-international armed conflicts have evolved in a variety of ways. Since the Cold War ended in 76 The Military's Frontiers..²⁸ These forces have been employed repeatedly and in different forms, since the end of the Cold War. But it's not

an encouraging experience. The United Nations was effective in only certain, selected instances – Cambodia, El Salvador and Namibia – but ineffective elsewhere. It usually failed because of poor organization, planning and execution on the part of the forces thereby leading to loss of credibility for United Nations, beside adding burdensome costs with these forces increasing UN financial crisis. There is also the selective nature of UN activity and non-activity, involvement in one episode yet not in another – such as the conflict in Chechnya (1993), which arose from Chechen republic's claim for unilateral secession but met with Russian government disapproval.

Reform of the Sanctions Imposed by the International Security Council

The United Nations considers that this phase of its work merits the special attention it will receive through the proposed measures.

1: Peacebuilding: The term peacebuilding, and with it the new idea of a post-armed conflict phase, emphasizes a vulnerable situation which comes after armed violence of any kind. However when it comes to the stage of non-international armed conflicts, but especially due to the contradictions and disparities formed by the environment where these conflicts arise, which are potential candidates in re-starting up another cycle of conflict. It was according to the mandate of the Security Council empowered to promote some aspects of peacebuilding process that may need certain kind of specialization those forces have, for they are linked with military and security related aspects among them are :

A. Addressing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) These are national level programs that seek to incorporate armed groups involved in the conflict back into society not as ex-combatants. This depends on the skills that such forces require for this process. Otherwise, they could become organized criminals or even start an armed rebel movement to undermine stability. This is over and above the need for recasting the military and national police once more to fit the phase society is entering into. It is also worth mentioning that such arrangements, regardless of the nature of the armed conflict in question and the identity of a party to implement these agreements, will not necessarily work as demonstrated again publicly in Iraq when American civil administrator Paul Bremer were introduced after Anglo-American occupation and attempted to disarm those forces.

B. Demining Clearance of unexploded ordnance by the debris of armed conflict is an actual problem for civilians' security measures and for going ahead of post-conflict phase. Resolution of this challenge is crucial to society finding its way back to normal, and it has become one of the central pillars in the peace project.

1- Reforming Security Sectors and Helping Consolidate the Deployment of International Authorities: It concerns the training of security and judicial sector cadres, as well as providing these personnel with the material required for their work.

D. Help in the Organization of Elections: UN forces help to organize the elections that the post-armed conflict era may see. This can be by securing the process, logistical support or providing the international experts and observers to monitor that the process is run in a correct manner. One such case where it was applied is the UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia (UNTAC).

Second: International Tribunals (a) The creation of international tribunals is one way the UN deals with the outcomes of non-international armed conflicts. It is a tool to bring perpetrators of serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law during such conflicts to justice. This was evidenced, inter alia, by the ICTY, ICTR and Special Court for Sierra Leone. The acts of ethnic and religious cleansing in the territory of the former Yugoslavia forced upon the Security Council, especially when it treated this situation in its resolution No. (808), whereby it considered that a threat to international peace and security emerges within that part of former Yugoslavia which is now Croatia. It then decided to create an international criminal tribunal for the prosecution of persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law (such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity). It requested the Secretary-General to report on various issues relating to the establishment of this court pursuant to the Resolution No. (827) and a statute establishing the court was adopted.

Accordingly, Security Council resolutions taken in the discharge of its functions under Chapter VII have binding character and are enforceable. As for the other resolutions and procedures of the Council - in principle they do not have such a significance. This conclusion, however, does not apply to the recommendations that have been made by the Security Council under Chapters IV, V and VI of the Charter on behalf of or binding upon Members of the Organization as well as its other organs as internal law within the Organization. It also does not commit to the recommendations made by the Security Council in exercise of Chapter VII authority, viewing them as binding resolutions only in name and devoid from any actual content. It is with respect to those resolutions and recommendations of the Security Council that a binding character attached thereto, by reason of the request for their inclusion in general decisions under Article 25 of the Charter. The evidence for the comprehensive nature of this resolution and its adoption as a recommendation is what has been included in Article 27 regarding

the voting regime in the Council, where reference has been made to Security Council resolutions generally and comprehensively without separating between resolutions and recommendations.

Section Two: Reform of the UN General Assembly

Since the General Assembly is the only principal organ of the United Nations in which all members of the organization are equally present and enjoy the same status and dignity of rights, the greater the role and influence of this organ in the international order and equations, the greater the hope of achieving a more just order and, as a result, the establishment of a more sustainable peace. Therefore, reforms in the scope of the competences and powers of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the mechanisms, procedures and mechanisms for decision-making and decision-making on international issues and issues, can be effective and decisive in order to compensate for the imbalance of power at the heart of this organization and preserve the principle of equal sovereignty among states. Although the principle of one state, one vote is respected in the General Assembly (each state, regardless of its size and small or large, has one vote), its real power is limited. The decisions and actions of the General Assembly often do nothing more, if they exist at all, than make non-binding recommendations. This weakens its potential to help guide the world's response to major international issues. This situation turns the General Assembly into a place for speeches rather than real decision-making, widening the gap between big and small powers.

Therefore, the authors of this article have also reached two imperatives regarding the reform of the General Assembly, which are discussed in the form of two requirements, respectively:

The first requirement: Restoring the power and role of the General Assembly.

The second requirement: Reforming the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Requirement One:

Reviving the General Assembly and Bestowing Authority upon It

If granting the General Assembly power, its decision-making structures will need to be reformed so that they become more agile and less politicized than they are at present. More-balanced voting systems can be accepted, taking into account population size, ability to pay and regional representation without rendering the one-state/one-vote principle hollow. Secondly, creating digital instruments for participation and increasing transparency levels are crucial if we are to restore confidence in the operation of the GA as an interactive institution with individuals, not only a reflection of government will.

Re-committing to its role will also call for strengthening the links with the Association General and other Councils, particularly ECOSOC and Executive Boards of UN programs. This will guarantee that there is an organic coordination between development and human rights policies, and the General Assembly must have guidance on leading global priorities, not steered by international financial institutions or large powers.

The role of civil society and academia and the business sector should be fully integrated into work of the General Assembly, within permanent consultative procedures which enrich them, lend legitimacy to decisions, and bring the Organization closer to the evolving global reality. The General Assembly has to become a real forum of multilateralism, where people's aspirations are reflected and equitable international policy is made, not just spun and forgotten instantly after its issuance.

Putting the General Assembly back at the center and giving it more authority, and thus reviving it, does not just involve changing texts or rules. It is a reintroduction of international justice and a reassertion of the principle that force does not rule alone, but must also be balanced by consensus, dialogue and shared participation. It is this reform that serves as the foundation upon which to construct a new international system more equitable and responsive to common human challenges

Requirement Two:

Repairing the Fault Line between the General Assembly and the Security Council

One of the most important crossroads in the reorganization of the United Nations is this matter of reforming General Assembly relations with the Security Council. That is why it strikes at the very heart of institutional equilibrium in the Organization and calls into question how power was shared between general representative organs and a limited executive organ. The current nexus reflects imbalance; decision-making authority is cornered by the Security Council and marginalized in key matters are the General Assembly, which accommodates all members of the U.N., as well as embodying sovereign equality.

This imbalance is not limited to the difference in power but also involves lack of institutional coordination and mutual monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The Security Council adopts binding decisions even in the

field of international peace and security, which is by definition a matter of concern to the entire international community, without recourse to the General Assembly. Furthermore, the General Assembly, even when it makes collective decisions, has no enforcement mechanisms nor follow-up measures which makes its resolutions virtually inconsequential end up being just political stances that remain unimplemented.

In addition, the General Assembly should have the power to consider Security Council resolutions that are controversial as a matter of law or morality, such as vetoes on issues involving genocide or crimes against humanity. By no means is this review aimed to cancel the resolutions of the Council, rather it attempts to provide an institutional equilibrium and that unilateral decisions cannot be enacted, while reiterating the Organization's plurality.

The development of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council is not meant to weaken one in the interests of empowering another. No, the issue is constructing a sound institutional model that balances representation, efficiency and accountability. The will of all is expressed in the General Assembly, policy is set by the Security Council. It would be an international decision, one held hostage by small interests if there is no true supervision or participation, when the Organization's legitimacy in the face of peoples and states collapses.

Rebuilding this relationship is thus a determining factor for rescuing the role of the United Nations and for making it capable of offering a just, facing actually and coherently the global challenges in a multilateral, transparent and equitable manner.

Conclusion

This research has shown that structural reform in the UN is not an abstract option in theory, but an imperative due to global geopolitical, geoeconomics transformations and ever growing peace-security and humanitarian threats. The study found that if the current machinery is allowed to remain and continue operating, in particular through the Security Council and General Assembly, an imbalance will survive which tends to make ineffective the capacity of the Organization to carry out its purposes of maintaining international peace and security and promoting justice and equal representation among states.

The reform of the SC voting system, and changing its working methods; review of sanctions regime as well as revitalization of GA role, strengthening of cooperation between G.A. and S.C., comprise essential steps to be taken towards creation of a fairer and more effective international order. Here are the findings and recommendations we have:

Findings:

The lingering exercise of the veto in its present form, thwarts the attainment of equitable solutions and bestows an unfair advantage to the permanent members.

The sanctions system established by the Security Council is not uniform in its standards and transparency, which has caused controversies in some cases over the politicization of sanctions.

Although a representative body, the General Assembly does not have substantial independent executive powers which would enable it to directly address—let alone resolve—the world's problems.

The G.A.-C.O. imbalance of which we are speaking is an institutional one — in respect to managers, with too little constraint of manager by member organization at the U.N.C.'s helm.

Proposals:

Reforming the voting system in the Security Council with a view to introducing provisions aimed at preventing abuse of the veto, particularly regarding humanitarian and international criminal matters.

Setting up an independent body to consider sanctions, before they are imposed, that complies with international law and the rule of law.

Supplementing the General Assembly with more authority to address and follow up regarding implementation of international resolutions, especially where deadlocked by the Security Council.

Strengthening the coordination of UN General Assembly and Security Council through regular and consultative institutional arrangements.

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