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FORTY YEARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND WORLD PEACE : AN OVERVIEW

In the present system of international relations a very important role is played by the United Nations, which emerged as a body to experience first in history wide political cooperation with different socio-economic systems with the aim of maintaining international peace and security and promoting economic and social progress of all peoples.

The failure of the League of Nations to avert the Second World War did not destroy the conviction that a system of international co-operation could be worked out in order to protect the world from the scourge of war. The formulation of definite plans for such an organization took shape in stage, at Dumbarton Oaks in 1944 at Yalta in 1945, and finally, at San Francisco conference in 1945 where fifty governments, on the basis of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, prepared by four sponsoring states, together drafted the United Nations Charter.¹ The United Nations officially started functioning in October 1945.

Since then the world has experienced unprecedented political, economic, technological and scientific changes. The United Nations membership has grown from 51 to 159. Today, the nations of the world for the first time in history have at their disposal a political

1. Waliur Rahman. "Bangladesh and the United Nations." *BILIA Journal* Vol. I. No. 2, July, 1975, pp 73-74.

institution in which virtually all countries are represented. At the same time, the United Nations has experienced a remarkable expansion of its responsibilities and the range of its activities.

The original intent of the United Nations was to provide a framework in which governments of differing persuasions could, in their wisdom, work out solutions to international problems and, if necessary, together take action to put those solutions into effect rather than engaging in conflict.

Today, at the end of its fourth decade, we find that we are close to a turbulent era, marked by much violence and tragedy. The deterioration in international relations has caused widespread forebodings about the prospects of peace, stability and development. At previous critical junctures in history, an uncontrolled drift in human affairs led to wars, which however destructive, did not threaten existence itself. At the present fateful stage, it can bring total annihilation to progress and civilization on earth.

In the four decades since the end of the Second World War, there have been well over a hundred international conflicts. The prospect of a nuclear holocaust has burgeoned with the nuclear arms race, an alarming increase in terrorism has heightened tensions globally, large-scale abuses of human rights have continued unabated in many countries and the world economy is in deep trouble.² The world military expenditure in 1985 will total 944 billion U.S. dollars following 810 billion dollars in 1983 and an estimated 875 billion in 1984³. There had been 1,493 nuclear explosions conducted in the world from 1945 to 1984⁴.

Each day, each hour the size and lethality of nuclear weapons increase. A nuclear aircraft carrier costs 4 billion dollars, which is

2. Yasushi Akashi, "Assessing the United Nations at 40". *Bangladesh Observer*, 28 June, 1985.

3. *Bangladesh Observer*, September 14, 1985.

4. *SIPRI Yearbook*, Taylor & Francis, London, 1985, p. 75.

more than the GNP of 53 countries.⁵ The hood of the cobra is spread. Humankind watches in frozen fear, hoping against hope that it will not strike. Never before the earth faced so much death and destruction.

The vicious circle of violence and reprisal in the Middle East and in Lebanon in particular, poses a great threat to peace. A complex unstable situation prevails in Central America with multiple factors, including the social and economic, accounting for its dangerous character. The serious impact of several other problems is evident on international affairs—the unrelenting and devastating Iran-Iraq war the situation relating to Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Namibia.

In addition poverty continues to deprive large masses of humanity of their dignity and rights. The serious and continuing crisis in the world economy is most actually felt in the third world. This can jeopardize not only the welfare of a major segment of the human race but also peace itself. The situation in many countries in Africa furnishes the most poignant reminder of the need for immediate, remedial action.

The history of post-war international relations has so far shown that the common interest in peace and security has tended to assert itself only when things have reached a dangerously critical stage. Until that stage short-term national interest and opportunism tend to override the common interest. We are still very far from general acceptance of the principles of the UN Charter as rules to be lived by at all times by all governments in their international relations.⁶

It is paradoxical that while contemporary realities have strengthened the need for the use of multilateral means for dealing with global problems and enlarged the scope for growth and development

5. Indira Gandhi, *Statements on Foreign Policy*, January-April, 1983, p. 33.

6. See the text of the Secretary-General's report to the 39th Assembly Session. *UN Chronicle*, Vol. XXI, No. 6, 1984, p. 2.

through multilateralism, there is an increasing questioning of the rules, instruments and modalities of multilateral co-operation. There is also on occasions, an apparent reluctance to make the effort required to use international organizations effectively.⁷

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What has happened to that vision set at San Francisco—the desire to build a new and better world ? The world turned out to be a more complex, far less orderly place than had been hoped at San Francisco.

This world body has weathered many storms. Founded in the euphoric days immediately following history's most terrible war, the new world organization was acclaimed as a new beginning in the search for peace. Since then the UN underwent transformations. But the question remains : has the United Nations lived upto the hopes of its founders ? What are the major problems confronting it today ? What are its prospects for the future ? These are among the critical questions that are dealt with in the present paper.

I

Looking at the above mentioned scenario, apparently it seems that the United Nations has been useless in promoting international peace and security. Faced with such dismaying facts it is not surprising that the "failure of the United Nations" has become a journalistic cliché. This cliché however does not stand critical examination. It is based on a basic misconception that the United Nations is some sort of failed world government.⁸

7. *Ibid.*

8. Yasushi Akashi, *op. cit.*

The UN is a unique forum for international debate and dialogue; its peace keeping role is a vital element in the limitation of conflict and the establishment of peace; it is a world-wide international diplomatic organization; it has become a global economic, social, and humanitarian organization. Today, there is hardly any aspect of human activity in which the UN is not, to some extent involved.⁹ Perhaps the most important of all, the UN has become a mirror of the hard facts of the world. The UN reflects the anguish of the two-thirds of mankind which live in abject poverty. The UN reflects the desparation of those with no education, those with no employment, those with no food and with no hope. The UN reflects racial discrimination, denial of basic human rights, injustice and persecution. The UN reflects a world which spends three times more on armaments than it does on health.¹⁰ The UN was planned and founded on the assumption of continued co-operation among the alies especially among the big powers which were given "Permanent Member" status in the Security Council. When the Cold War set those countries in opposing camps it not only rendered unworkable the Charter concept of collective security, it complicated all other aspects of international co-operation.

When the system of collective security as envisaged in the Charter proved unworkable, the UN worked out a method through which at least threat to security could be contained. UN peace-keeping role has proved over the years quite vital for deterring conflicts which could have otherwise grown into major ones.

II

Peace-making and Peace-keeping

Through a process of experimentation, improvisation, and widening of activity, the United Nations is already a very different organization from the one envisaged at San Francisco. In spite of many

9. Kurt Waldheim, "The Search for Peace in an Interdependent World", in Robert L. Schiffer (ed), *Building the Future Order*, N.Y. 1980, pp. 15-16.

10. *Ibid.*

setbacks and frustrations, it has developed its capacity both in the political field as a peace-keeping and peace-making organization and as a crucial factor in power relationships among nations and, in the economic, social and humanitarian fields as an agents for peaceful change, a channel for co-operative activity and a co-ordinating point for large humanitarian programmes involving both bilateral and multilateral assistance. It has branched out into special activities far beyond the expectations of its founders and has begun to play a central role in stimulating the thinking and plans for action of Governments within a series of agreed international guidelines.

Throughout its history, the United Nations has often been called upon to prevent a dangerous situation from escalating into war, to persuade opposing parties to use the conference table rather than resort to arms, and to help restore peace or at least halt the fighting when conflicts occur. It has also continued its effort to facilitate the search for peaceful settlements of great international problems.

The Secretary General under the Charter (Article 99) has the capacity to bring any situation that threatens peace and security to the attention of the Security Council.¹¹ Initial actions by the world organization may take the form of an appeal to refrain from aggravating the situation or, if fighting has broken out, a ceasefire order may be issued. The parties to a dispute are given an opportunity to present their cases before the Council or Assembly, and such discussions may be useful to discover common ground for a settlement. "Quiet diplomacy", a blend of public and private negotiations carried on at United Nations headquarters, has proved useful in breaking deadlocks. "Preventive diplomacy" in the form of a United Nations "presence" or police force to fill a power vacuum is also employed if a great-power confrontation threatens to expand a dispute.

United Nations has applied its pacifying and moderating influence to many disputes and situations over its history. Two dramatic

11. See, *Charter of the United Nations*, United Nations N.Y. p. 50.

instances e.g., the Berlin crisis of 1948-1949 and the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the world was on the verge of turning into nuclear confrontation show the very positive role the UN played at that critical juncture in history to avert serious crisis situations.

Great-power confrontations have been avoided with the United Nations "presence" in Lebanon in 1958 and in Congo in 1960. Bitter communal feuds over territorial jurisdiction have been moderated in Kashmir, Palestine, and Cyprus, and fighting that threatened to escalate into a major subcontinental war between India and Pakistan was stopped through United Nations efforts in 1948 and again in 1965. The value of UN peace keeping forces was clearly demonstrated in 1967 when it was removed from Sinai at the request of Egypt and war followed almost immediately thereafter. In 1973 the deployment of another United Nations Middle East force staved off what could have been a disastrous confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States. In South-east Asia a United Nations mission not only helped mitigate hostilities between the Dutch and the nationalist forces in Indonesia but supervised the process that led to the end of colonial rule. In the process of decolonization as a whole which has seen over 750 million people achieve their freedom in the last four decades the United Nations has played a valuable role. It has not only focused international attention and pressure on recalcitrant colonial powers but in a number of cases has supervised plebiscites and subsequent transfers of power.¹²

In the early 1980s, United Nations efforts to free American hostages held in Iran and to get the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan were major dispute settlement challenges. Often the Secretary General has made his good offices available to the parties in disputes, either directly or through a special representative as in the cases of Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

Since 1948 a number of peace keeping operations have been established by the United Nations to ease and contain conflict

12. Yasushi Akashi, *op. cit.*

situations. The methods and machinery for preventing or terminating conflicts have taken many forms. In some disputes, the United Nations has acted through peace keeping forces, observer of fact-finding missions, plebiscite supervision, good offices missions, conciliation panels, mediators and special representatives. In other matters, it has provided the forum for debate and negotiation and a channel for quiet diplomacy.

The first peace keeping operation established by the UN was an observer mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine (UNTSO) set up in May 1948. Later other Observer missions were set up according to the same principles as UNTSO : the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in August 1949, the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGUL) in June 1958, the United Nations Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM) in June 1963, and the Mission of the Representative of the Secretary General in the Dominican Republic (DOMREP) in April 1965.¹³

There have been in all seven peace-keeping forces. The first one was the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF-I) which was in operation in Egypt-Israel sector from November 1956 until May 1967. The United Nations Force in the Congo (ONUC) was deployed in the Republic of the Congo (now Zaire) from July 1960 until 1964. The United Nations Security Force in West Irian, which is generally considered a peace-keeping operation was in operation from September 1962 until April 1963. The other four forces, which are still in operation, are the United Nations Peace-keeping forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP), established in March 1964; the Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF-II), established in October 1973; United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), established in May 1974; and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) established in March 1978.¹⁴

13. *Everyone's United Nations*, UN, New York, 1979, p. 67.

14. *ibid*, p. 67.

A United Nations peace-keeping operation is not an enforcement action as envisaged in Article 42 of the Charter, and it is carried out with the consent and co-operation of the parties concerned. Its main function has been prevention of resumption or expansion of a conflict through impartial supervision of cease-fires, truce or armistice agreements and troop withdrawals and through the stabilizing influence of a United Nations "Presence". The peace-keeping operations seek to achieve their objective by negotiation and persuasion rather than by force. United Nations peace-keeping operations are coupled with a peace-making effort to seek a peaceful solution of the political problems at the root of the conflict.

There have been in the past years several regional situations with grave potential implications for international peace. Here we shall deal in short with some crisis situations where the UN was involved.

United Nations Operations in Congo (ONUC)

A military-civilian force was established in 1960 to restore peace and order in the former Belgian Congo. The UN sent an emergency force to the Congo to try to keep the peace, to stop civil war. ONUC was built into a force of over 20,000, with military personnel furnished by twenty-nine states. In addition, the largest civilian team ever fielded by the UN carried out a massive countrywide technical assistance programme. Over 400 million dollars was spent between July 1960, and June, 1964, when ONUC was disbanded. The Congo military operation was so enormous that it contributed to a financial crisis that brought the UN to the verge of bankruptcy.

The ONUC operation was aimed at preventing great power intervention, restoring domestic peace, rebuilding the nation's economy and unifying the state. During its four years of operations, ONUC succeeded in preventing the Congo from becoming a great-power battle ground, integrating secessionist states, and restoring a measure of political and economic stability. The UN operation in

the Congo is an example of the exercise of "preventive diplomacy" by which neutral forces under UN auspices attempt to fill a political power vacuum to avoid a direct East-West confrontation.

United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

A peace-supervising force was established by the Security Council in 1964 to help end the violence between the Greek and Turkish communities on Cyprus. UNFICYP was formed with the objective of maintaining law and order on the island, preventing a recurrence of the fighting, and preserving international peace and security.

However, the search for a political settlement sustained a setback when, on 15 November 1983, the Turkish Cypriot authorities proclaimed a "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus". The Security Council, in a resolution adopted on 18 November, considered the declaration by the Turkish Cypriot authorities of the purported secession of part of the Republic of Cyprus as legally invalid and called for its withdrawal. Since then the Secretary-General has been pursuing his mission of good offices in order to achieve the earliest possible progress towards a just and lasting settlement in Cyprus.¹⁵

Although the United Nations Force in Cyprus has been successful in reducing the violence between the two communities, the United Nations has failed to find a formula for resolving the dispute. UNFICYP's mandate has regularly been renewed by the Security Council to prevent the likely resumption of civil war. UNFICYP illustrates the role of an international police force under UN auspices essential to the preservation of Peace in the area, even if unable to resolve the basic issues between the parties.

The Middle East

Of the great political problems for which the United Nations has specific responsibilities, the Middle East continues to be the most

15. *UN Chronicle*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, 1984. p. 2.

urgent and complex. There can be no doubt this question is central to the political, economic, and military stability of the world. As long as uncertainty, discord, frustration and violence prevail in the Middle East, the world will continue to live with a grave and continuing risk of future disaster.

The Middle East problem is so sensitive that it is virtually impossible to make any suggestions or proposals about it without upsetting some, or sometimes all, of the parties concerned. This sensitivity has been faced by the succession of mediators, representatives, negotiators and good offices missions that have tried to be of assistance in the last four decades.¹⁶

A just and lasting peace in the Middle East can ultimately only be achieved through a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the question, including in particular the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The United Nations offers in this regard unique possibilities which have not yet been fully utilized. The practical involvement of the UN has continued to be mainly in the field of peace-keeping—the unceasing effort to keep down the temperature and to avert the confrontations which could so easily lead to widespread conflict and make all movements towards peace impossible. The UN has established peace-keeping machinery and formulated principles for a peaceful settlement. It has dealt with a number of problems in the Middle East.

In 1956, following Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, Israel, and subsequently, France and the United Kingdom intervened militarily in Egypt. The General Assembly, meeting in emergency Special Session, called for a ceasefire and withdrawal of those forces from Egyptian territory, and authorized the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), the first UN peace-keeping force.

16. Kurt Waldheim, *op. cit.* pp. 38-39.

UNEF supervised the troop withdrawals and was then deployed on Egyptian territory, with Egypt's consent, to act as a buffer between Egyptian and Israeli forces. It patrolled the Egypt-Israel armistice demarcation line and the international frontier to the south of the Gaza Strip and brought relative quiet to the area. The Canal, blocked as a result of the hostilities was cleared by the United Nations.

In 1967, fighting broke out (soon after UNEF was withdrawn) between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire. When hostilities ended six days later Israel had occupied Sinai and the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the Jordan, including East Jerusalem, and part of Golan Heights. The Secretary General acting on decision of the Council, stationed UNTSO observers in the Golan and Suez Canal sectors to supervise the cease-fire.

On 22 November 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 242 (1967), which defined principles for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The principles to be applied were :

- withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; and
- termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for an acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force.¹⁷

Fighting broke out again on 6 October 1973, when Egyptian forces in the Suez Canal sector and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights attacked Israeli positions. On 22 October, the Council adopted Resolution 338 (1973), calling on the parties to cease all firing and to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Resolution 242 (1967) in all its parts.¹⁸

17. *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, UN, N.Y. 1980, p. 11, 15.

18. *Ibid.*

As the fighting continued, the Security Council on 25 October 1973 adopted a resolution in which it demanded an immediate and complete cease-fire and decided to set up under its authority a new United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). The prompt arrival of UNEF in the Egypt-Israeli sector effectively restored the cease-fire. The situation in the area has remained generally quiet since then.

From 1974 onwards, efforts were made at various levels to promote an early resumption of the negotiating process aimed at a just and durable settlement in the Middle East. The Security Council repeatedly called upon the parties concerned to implement its Resolution 338 (1973).

The convening of an international peace conference on the Middle East was endorsed by the General Assembly in December 1984 at the conclusion of debates on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. The world body, in a number of resolutions also called for an end to all forms of political, military, economic, financial, technological and other forms of support to Israel with the aim of isolating it totally in all fields. It specified that all states, in particular the United States, should refrain from supporting Israel's "war capabilities".¹⁹

As for Lebanon, the situation has remained tense. The most explosive elements of the Middle East situation exist in close proximity

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mity in and around Southern Lebanon, and their interaction represents both a national tragedy for Lebanon and a constant threat to the

19. *UN Chronicle*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, 1984. p. 79.

wider peace. In the recent years there has been a serious escalation of violence in this area, resulting in civilian casualties heavy damage and the flight of many inhabitants. Another United Nations peace-keeping force was set up in March 1978 after the Israeli forces invaded South Lebanon following a Palestinian comando raid into Israel. The Security Council called on Israel to cease immediately its military action against Lebanon's territorial integrity, and it established the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restore international peace and security and help the Lebanese government reestablish its effective authority in the area²⁰.

The situation in this troubled area has been for many years a vicious circle of violence and reprisal in which the perennial losers have been the civilian population.

The United Nations so far has undertaken a number of measures within its capacity for peace-keeping in Lebanon and tried to find out a solution to bring a halt to the untold tragedy in Lebanon. But if there is to be any hope of a solution, all parties to the Middle East conflict need to abandon many preconceived ideas and ingrained attitudes, and all must make a serious effort to appreciate the difficulties of their adversaries, and all must make an attempt to come to terms with the very harsh, and often unjust, realities of this most difficult of all international problems.

Besides these, in the past years, there have been several regional situations with grave potential implications for international peace. At present time, for example such situations exist in South-east Asia, Afghanistan, Central America, Southern Africa and in the Iran-Iraq war.

In all of them the multilateral approach of the United Nations complemented by bilateral efforts and the initiatives of different groups of member states, seems to present the best way of maintaining the momentum towards a settlement.

20. *United Nations Organization*, (in Russian) Moscow, 1980, p. 23.

All these past accomplishments and the present problems required and requires a multilateral structure of co-operation. In some situations the UN, or the Secretary General, remains essential to communication between the parties. At present, the Secretary-General is engaged in a new effort to find a just solution to Afghan problem, the Iran-Iraq war and the Kampuchea issue.

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criticism. As the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, noted, "...the United Nations poses a problem for the United States. It's expensive, its often ineffective, it seems particularly inclined to push policies that we do not desire to adopt, decisions from which we dissent, agreements with which we disagree"²¹ Unfortunately, there seems to be a tendency on the part of the US and some member-countries to remake this international body in their own image. Some expect the UN to serve their unilateral interests consistently. For those who look at the world as a place where only one opinion on any subject can be held or is valid the UN is obviously a threat.

However, for all of the UN accomplishments of the past decades, and they have been major, the fact of the matter is that the three main elements of a stable international order-an accepted system of maintaining international peace and security; disarmament and arms limitation; and the progressive development of a just and effective system of international economic relations have yet to take hold as they should.

21. Cited in Toby Trister Gati (ed.), *The US, the UN, and the Management of Global Change*, New, York University Press, 1983, p. 3.

Measures to Strengthen Peace and Reduce Tensions

Under Article 11 of the Charter,²² the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The General Assembly, since its Second Session, in 1947, has adopted a number of resolutions containing general recommendations aimed at reducing international tensions and strengthening peace and friendship among nations.

The Assembly has determined that for lasting peace, it was indispensable that prompt united action be taken to meet aggression and that every nation agree to accept effective international control of atomic energy, to strive for control and elimination of weapons of mass destruction, to regulate armaments and forces and to reduce to a minimum the diversion of human and economic resources for armaments. The Assembly has also called on all states to make every effort to strengthen international peace, to develop friendly and co-operative relations and to settle disputes by peaceful means as enjoined by the Charter ; and recommended that the members foster open, free and friendly co-operation in economics, culture, technology and communications.

The main resolution and declaration on peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes and international co-operation in strengthening peace adopted by the Assembly over the years include the following:

- the 1957 resolution on peaceful and neighbourly relations among states, which stresses the need to develop friendly co-operation and peaceful relations among states irrespective of their divergencies;
- the 1965 Declaration on the inadmissibility of intervention in the domestic affairs of states and protection of their independence and sovereignty, which condemns all forms of such intervention as contrary to the principles of the Charter and a threat to universal peace;

22. *Charter of the United Nations, op. cit. p. 8.*

- the 1970 Declaration on principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among states in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations which sets forth seven principles, including the principle that states shall refrain from the threat or use of force against any state and the principle that states shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means;
- the 1977 Declaration of the deepening and consolidation of international detente in which member states declare their determination to strive to remove both causes and effects of international tension and to strengthen the role of the UN in maintaining international peace;
- the 1981 Declaration on the prevention of nuclear catastrophe, which reaffirms that the foremost task of the UN is to save present and succeeding generations from the scourge of war and declares that any actions pushing the world toward a nuclear catastrophe are incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the Charter;
- the 1982 Manila Declaration on the peaceful settlement of international disputes, which reaffirms the principle of the Charter that all states shall settle their disputes and on the maintenance of international peace and security²³

Disarmament

In no area is the need for a recommitment to the principles to the Charter more important and more closely tied to the survival of humanity than in the field of disarmament and arms limitation. The prevention of nuclear war remains the unique challenge of our time, since such a war would be the ultimate negation of all human endeavour. While the international community as a whole is deeply concerned with this vital problem, the key to its solution is in the hands of the two major nuclear powers.

23. See *Everyone's United Nations, op. cit.*, pp. 62-67; and *Basic Facts About the United Nations op. cit.*, pp. 11.1-11.2.

The failure so far to achieve real progress in arms control talks can only cause all profound alarm. The situation could well become virtually irreversible if the establishment of viable methods of arms limitation is jeopardized by the development of new weapons systems, and if either side, in search of military advantage, deploys strategic weapons that suggest an attempt to reach out for first strike capability. Currently, even more acute is the problem of intermediate-range missiles, which may reach a critical stage unless the ongoing negotiations bear fruit. Beyond all this there looms the longer-term prospect of the militarization of the outer space and the computerization and automation of warfare, which could eventually escape political control altogether.

The situation relating to conventional arms is a source of increasing concern. It is necessary to bear in mind that that the many millions killed in war since Hiroshima and Nagasaki have all died from conventional weapons.

In the Final Document of the 1978 Special Session on Disarmament, the General Assembly called for consultations among major arms supplier and recipient countries to limit transfers of conventional weapons, in order to preserve security and promote stability at a lower military level.²⁴

So far joint efforts by the United Nations and by the Governments have produced limited but important first steps in the form of international arms control agreements dealing particularly with the threat of nuclear weapons. Important among these are:

- the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, the first treaty to put into practice the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zone, later applied to the sea-bed, outer space and Latin America; it prohibits in the Antarctic region any military manoeuvres, weapon tests, building installations or the disposal of radioactive wastes produced by military activities;

24. *UN Chronicle*, vol. XX, No. 9, 1983, p. 77.

- the 1963 Treaty banning nuclear weapons test in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, called the Partial Test Ban Treaty because it does not ban underground tests; the UN has repeatedly urged conclusion of a comprehensive treaty banning all tests, whether in the atmosphere, underground or underwater;
- the 1966 treaty on principles governing the activities of states in the exploration and use of outer space including the moon and other celestial bodies bans nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction from the earth's orbit, prohibits the military use of celestial bodies or the placing of those bodies and bars the stationing of weapons in outer space;
- the 1967 treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco) created the first nuclear weapon-free zone in a densely populated area and is the first arms control agreement whose implementation is verified by an international organization;
- the 1968 treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (Non-proliferation Treaty) aims at limiting the spread of nuclear weapons from nuclear to non-nuclear countries, at promoting the process of disarmament by the nuclear nations and at guaranteeing all countries access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes;
- the 1971 Convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and their destruction was the first international agreement providing for genuine disarmament, that is, the destruction of existing weapons; and
- the 1976 Convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques prohibits the use of techniques that would have widespread, long lasting or severe effects in causing such phenomena as earthquakes, tidal waves and changes in weather and climate patterns.

Unfortunately despite these important agreements²⁵ for limitation and regulation of armaments, global expenditures on arms and armies have continued to mount, consuming material and human resources that might otherwise be applied to development purposes.

By 1976, the Assembly, deploring the "meagre achievement" of the decade in terms of truly effective disarmament and arms limitation agreements, decided to hold a Special Session in 1978 devoted entirely to disarmament.

In the Final Document of this Special Session the General Assembly called for consultations among major arms suppliers and recipient countries to limit transfers of conventional weapons, in order

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to preserve security at a lower military level. The programme of action listed priorities and measures that states should undertake as a matter of urgency in the field of disarmaments. Priorities include: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons; and conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.

The Second Special Session on Disarmament was held in 1982. Since 1982, the General Assembly, at its Regular Sessions, has called for implementation of the recommendations and decisions of the First and Second Special Sessions on Disarmament and in particular has continued to call for :

- cessation of all test explosions of nuclear weapons, including underground nuclear weapons tests, and conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty:

25. See *Basic Facts About the United Nations*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11.26-11.27; and *United Nations Organization*, *op. cit.*, Moscow, 1980.

- a freeze on nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon states, particularly the Soviet Union and the United States;
- the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and South Asia, and the implementation of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1964 ;
- the conclusion of an international convention on the strengthening of the security of non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons ;
- the conclusion of conventions of the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical and radiological weapons and on their destruction ;
- agreement on the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, and reduction of military budgets and reallocation of resources now being used for military purposes to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of the developing countries.

By passing scores of disarmament resolutions, the UN expresses humankind's best intention, but it is not in a position to do very much about the arms race. Working through the conference on Disarmament in Geneva however, the UN has usefully supplemented East-West negotiations and has put a global stamp of approval on numerous agreements requiring broad multilateral consent. Through a series of working groups, fact finding missions, and publications, UN forums are paying increasing attention to issues of fundamentally multilateral character—such as conventional arms transfers, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons testing, nuclear proliferation, military budget limitations, and various regional measures—rather than simply blaming all the world's ills on the recalcitrance of the superpowers.

III

Problems and prospects of the United Nations :

The UN is beset with a number of problems. At a time when the UN faces the toughest challenges in its turbulent history, the policies of some of the member countries toward the organization is ambivalent, defensive and lacking in will and commitment.

While the UN was still in its infancy, the wartime coalition on which it was founded collapsed. The politics of the organization quickly came to reflect the divisiveness of the modern world. As the gap widened between the idealistic vision projected in the UN Charter and the political realities, the Organization's spirit has sagged. The initial sense of common purpose has given way to power politics, cynical rhetoric and public posturing.

We are at present in a period when the value of multilateral diplomacy is being questioned and international institutions are not functioning as they were intended to function. The machinery is running and the wheels are turning, but it is not moving forward as it should. This applies to the UN and in different degrees, to regional organizations and to many international agencies and groupings. Nor is it evident that bilateral diplomacy or unilateral efforts are in most cases filling the gap by providing that correlation on national policies which is essential to future stability and the general international interest. Member countries must find means to push the machinery into forward motion again. If they do not do this, they run the risk of being caught immobile and in the open, in a new international storm too great to weather.

In the recent years the collective capacity and influence of the Security Council have been insufficiently tested. There are important issues where the members of the Council including the permanent members, hold substantially similar views. And yet other factors not directly related to these problems inhibit the Council from exerting collective influence as envisaged in the Charter.

This applies to peace keeping. Peace keeping is one of the more successful innovations of the UN. But when this technique cannot be used in a situation which obviously requires it, because the members of the Security Council are divided on the matter, the obvious conclusion is that there is something wrong with the UN

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and with the concept of internationalism. This conclusion is of course easier than analysing the conflicting positions and motives of Governments which are the real cause of the impasse and of the failure of the United Nations to act or to respond.

There are some more problems which the UN has to face. First, are the weaknesses caused by the machinery through which the UN has to operate : (a) the exercise of the veto by the five permanent members in the Security Council, (b) the absence of a permanent and strong international police force and (c) the absence of compulsory jurisdiction forcing states to submit disputes to the UN for adjunction, (d) unwillingness of some of the member-countries to give financial contribution to the UN. Second, the organization has been in existence without basic change for 40 years. Yet not only have its members increased but economic issues have been dominant. A great number of interdependent problems now call for answers—energy, trade, commodities, monetary questions, inflation—and all they get are endless resolutions and declarations, hardly decisions. In May, 1976, the Director-General of the FAO stressed that 80 percent of its expenditure went on salaries of staff and costs of administration of its seven great buildings in Rome, and a further 9 percent on conferences.²⁶ Third, the unusual environment in which the UN finds itself. While its record since 1954 is highly credible, its work

26. Esmond Wright, *The World Today*, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company (UK) Ltd, 1978, p. 288.

has been devilled by the cold war and by the atmosphere of extreme nationalism in which its deliberations take place.

The basic problems of the UN relate to its purpose, its politics and the attitudes of its members, but the organization also suffers serious internal management and personnel problems. The regular budget of the UN is scheduled to grow less than 1% in the next biennium to nearly 1.6 billion dollars, yet these resources must be spent in the most cost effective manner. Rules should be instituted requiring that funds for any new programmes added by the General Assembly to future budgets be found through savings in other activities. Moreover the growing expenditures for conference services, translating and printing need to be brought under control. Meetings, speeches, and reports may well be the primary natural outputs of an organization devoted to international communication, but the volumes of paper and amounts of travel have become excessive and counterproductive.²⁷

Already grumbling about the costs of maintaining existing peace keeping forces, member states sometimes become reluctant to provide the personnel necessary for new efforts. But of course, their complaints are shortsighted. Rather than rallying behind the one international mechanism that has worked well at keeping warring parties apart, diplomats complain that peace-keeping does not in itself resolve the underlying issues. They forget that peace-keeping was designed not to substitute for diplomacy but to provide time for wounds to heal and for the political process to work.²⁸

In spite of all these problems the United Nations has a future prospect. In the eyes of the new nations UN has extraordinary importance. Membership in the Organization is a symbol of nationhood and participation in its councils a cherished opportunity. For many of the smaller nations, the UN provides an indispensable arena for contact with the outside world. In addition, the UN and

27. Edward C. Luck, "The UN at 40 : A Supporter's Lament." *Foreign Policy*, No. 57, Winter, 1984-85. pp. 152-153.

28. Edward Luck, op. cit., p. 150

its specialized agencies are an important source and channel for technical and economic assistance. Far more than the great powers, the small nations look upon the UN as a shield against aggression. This 'deterrent potential', of the UN is doubtless more effective than we are apt to realize, in protecting some of the small new nations from the ambitions of less small neighbours.

More significantly, the advent of the new nations has greatly increased the influence of the Afro-Asian group, which now comprises half the membership. Their problems are not of the cold war but of development. So Afro-Asian solidarity is a fight of the 'have nots' against the 'haves'. Many people in the West denounce the polarization of the UN into feuding power groups, but the Afro-Asians see this as a fulfilment. To them the value of the UN is precisely that it gives them admission to a world parliament.

The United Nations must be judged not only as a debating body or as a military force but as the focus of a number of specialized agencies, all working for progress. For millions who are among the most vulnerable and helpless of the world's people, the UN has provided life-saving support. Often as in the Middle East, South-East Asia and Central America today such aid can have an important stabilizing impact. In other situations as in Africa today the UN is involved not only in the massive famine relief but vital longterm struggle to stop the encroaching desert.

The United Nations system channels some US \$ 2.6 billion in development aid annually. Largely through the efforts of the UN

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system major problems such as increasing food production, accelerating the pace of industrial development, lowering trade barriers and faci-

litating the transfer of technology have received sustained international attention. To take but one specific example the "green revolution" in Asia owes its widespread success in substantial measure to the support provided by the UN agencies.²⁹

During the Seventh Non-aligned Summit Conference, the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi proposed that the United Nations should be strengthened by a meeting of Heads of State or Government to give a fresh collective look at some of the major problems of the world.³⁰ At this critical time in human relations it is encouraging that the non-aligned movement has spoken as a protagonist of the multilateral approach and of the purposes and principles of the Charter. Nor is such a view by any means limited to the non-aligned movement. Many leaders throughout the world have expressed their desire to see the United Nations function in the manner in which it was intended to function. The UN activities can be a success story if the major powers truly want a strong UN role in peace and security issues. In doing this, they must bolster the Secretary General's role in the process. His office provides the most dynamic possibilities for constructive and rapid action, particularly in today's contentious political environment. After warning in his first annual report to the General Assembly in 1982 that "we are perilously near to a new international anarchy". Javier Perez de Cuellar has recently become more active in mediating international disputes.³¹

His report called on the Security Council to be "more systematic" in keeping an active watch on dangerous situations and promised that his office would "develop a wider and more systematic capacity for fact finding in potential conflict areas",³²

And in fact, the Secretary General and his representatives have used their good offices in the Iran-Iraq war, Afghanistan, southern

29. Yasushi Akashi *op. cit.*

30. *UN Chronicle*, vol. No. 9, 1983, p. 81.

31. Edward C. Luck, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

Africa, the Middle East, Cyprus and Indochina as well as in the Falklands-Malvinas disputes. His efforts have met with only modest success but he has managed to open channels of communications in situations where no others exist and where none of the major powers has credibility and leverage with all sides. Again with the present US-Soviet relations at their lowest ebb in many years, the Secretary-General has maintained good relations with both Moscow and Washington and has quietly worked to help bridge the gap between them, stressing their common interest in disarmament and better communications.

The cruel and dangerous war between Iran and Iraq although demonstrates the limitations of the Secretary General's role in managing local conflicts, it should be kept in mind that while the rest of the international community has been immobilized through indifference, impotence or inertia, the Secretary-General has acted on his own initiative with considerable skill and courage. He appointed a fact finding team to investigate Iranian charges that Iraq had used chemical weapons in violation of international norms just as he had done in the murkier case of yellow rain. Since March 1984 when the team confirmed that there was unequivocal evidence of chemical weapons use, the Iraqis have desisted, eliminating one of that costly war's more hideous features.³³

In another humanitarian gesture, Perez de Cuellar has obtained an understanding from both sides that they will refrain from bombarding each other's cities, and has sent observers to both countries to monitor development.

Whatever the final outcome, the Secretary General has shown that even without the military, political or economic leverage to compel resolution of a conflict, his office sometimes has unique capabilities as a mediator and catalyst.

Elsewhere, the United Nations, through the process of decolonization, through its pioneering activities in development, in its

33. *ibid.*, p. 151.

current search for a new international economic order and in an increasingly broad attempt to tackle global problems, has been, and is, the centre of an effort to find new arrangements fitting and adequate for our interdependent world. The objective of such arrangements should be above all to try to make the fundamental changes necessary to lessen the gap between the rich and the poor and open the door of opportunity to all. The problems and obstacles are uniquely complex and difficult, and progress is slow but the focus and the objectives are there.

In the present global situation, we have to some extent lost sight of the enormous advances that have been made on so many fronts in the past forty years, Both with the League of Nations and with

History tells us that we cannot afford to take for granted the persistence of moderation and reason in international affairs, and that international organization is necessary as a safeguard when moderation and reason fail.

the United Nations, after initial enthusiasm a great disillusionment set in and Governments tended more and more to disregard the political functions of the international organization which they themselves had set up in the wake of war and to revert to the international practices of earlier times. In the 1930s this process led to the Second World war. Unless mankind is prepared to learn from the past and to make the international political institutions work as they were intended to work, the danger will always exist. History tells us that we cannot afford to take for granted the persistence of moderation and reason in international affairs, and that international organization is necessary as a safeguard when moderation and reason fail.

In this turbulent world situation we cannot afford despair or cynicism. Humankind must develop a sense of human solidarity, finding expression in a strong family of international institutions, if the world's major international problems are to be contained and ultimately solved.

Such an approach requires simultaneous progress in several areas. It requires progress on disarmament. It requires concerted and constructive efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully, especially in the Middle East and southern Africa. It requires a practical and effective approach to the better distribution of global economic opportunities. It requires above all a universal effort to rise above narrow nationalistic aims in the pursuit of global objectives.

Today, as never before, we need to reaffirm the Charter concept that threats to international peace and security, from whatever source or in whatever region of the world, override ideological or other differences between states and entail an obligation on all states to agree and cooperate. Under the terms of the Charter some situations clearly require immediate consideration and action by the Security Council regardless of political disagreements. Surely one such situation is when national frontier is violated and the state concerned calls for the United Nations action.

Without a UN system mankind shall run risks and it is therefore irresponsible to weaken the multilateral approach. Without the safety net which multilateral organization provides, the world would certainly be a much more dangerous and disorderly place.

The United Nations have now 40 years of experience, 40 years of change, and for all the conflict of our time, 40 years without global war. Peoples should multiply their efforts to strengthen the United Nations as the framework for a future saner world order.

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