

IS THE UN A SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

The UN was established in 1945. The United Nations was set-up to take over The League of Nations, an organisation also conceived during similar circumstances during the First World War. The League of Nations (LON) in 1919 was brought about under the Treaty of Versailles "to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security." The UN adopted a similar idea, to ensure World Peace, and to establish the economic, social and political foundations. The UN has fifteen member states. Five of them are; Great Britain (GB), China (CH), United States (US), France (FR) and Russia (RU). These five have permanent membership and have the right to Veto. (Which the French and Russians are threatening to use at the moment, concerning the attack on Iraq). The UN is multipurpose organisation boasting six principle organs. They are; Security Council (SC), General Assembly (GA), Secretariat (SEC), Economic and Social Council (ESC), Trusteeship (TRU), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The SC, and GA are looked upon as the most important organs of the UN. The ICJ tends to be an organ that is publicised frequently as a key failure of the UN. But how much of a failure is the UN?

The UN has had success with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). IMF opened in 1948. It had set itself three major aims. These were; to avoid the 1930's (Wall street Crash-depression), quick money and advice to ailing economies, and initially to the market economies, then to the ex-colonies. So far these aims have been successfully maintained and has been a gain to the world. The WB was founded in 1945, to provide loans to governments for economic developments. So on the surface it looks as though these two UN agencies are helping the world's economic stability, but infact they are making the Global North economically

stronger, and placing the Global South (third world) in even more debt and ever more reliant on the Global North. This could be argued due to the extortionate rates that the countries have to pay back to these two organisations, and to borrow from the IMF, a country has to implement the economic policies that are laid down by the IMF. So in fact the two (IMF and WB) could be claimed to be a form of Neo-Colonialism.

Other agencies that the UN has had success in are, The UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). UNESCO promotes basic literature, which enables over fifteen million people without access to other educational facilities, to read and write. WHO's objective is "the attainment by all citizens of the world of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life." Some of the agencies most successful work has been; assisting health service, clinics to advise family planning and child nutrition, it's helped train medical staff and water engineers, controlling tropical diseases etc. These are just a few things that WHO have been able to do. So it's clear to see that the agencies have aided the lives of millions and will more than likely continue to. However, GB and the US have withdrawn workers at times for fears that the education that the people were receiving was too indoctrinating. So it could be claimed that the US and GB was only carrying out this 'help' for their own benefits.

The UN has been described as failure in a number of ways. The ICJ has a dreadful record. It averages two to three cases per year. It's heard only sixty- four contentious cases between states, passing judgement on under half, and issuing nineteen Advisory Opinions. In fact many of the contentious cases were not of any great international importance! Therefore it has been claimed to be unable to fulfil its role to sufficient standard. For example, within the ICJ's first year it had a case to sort out. 1946 GB vs. Albania. GB ships were damaged and lives were lost, as Albania had apparently mined the Corfu Channel. GB took the issue to the SC, which

declared it a legal issue to be viewed by the ICJ. Albania consequently refused to accept the judgement and pay damages. SO it quickly became apparent that there was no value in raising major disputes before the court, because if they cannot cope with a minor country like Albania, then how will they deal with a bigger issue/country. Even now countries do not even bother with the ICJ and most see it as a shambles. But in 1969, miraculously the ICJ did have a little bit of success. West Germany vs. Denmark vs. Netherlands. New principles had to be laid down the dividing up of the continental shelf beneath the sea. Throughout the 1970's and 80's, the ICJ settled several cases of disputes.

The UNSC could also be claimed to be a failure. During LON era, it had four main failures, which were; it had no army of it's own, lacked authority to impose collective decisions to defend a member state, it was paralysed during the crisis by the rule of unanimity, inherited from 19th century conferences, and the absence of several major powers i.e. Germany, Britain etc, made it unrepresentative. When the UN was established the Security Council had hoped to improve on these areas. For instance, where the LON had no army of it's own, the UN hoped to have armed forces permanently at it's disposal, but infact it has never had the armed forces at its disposal that it wanted. (Number 1 failure). They aimed for the council to be given authority over every member for calling for collective action. But, as the UN was unable to have an army of its own, it meant that it would not be able to stamp its authority on the other countries. (Number 2 failure). The UN wanted the veto to be abolished, apart from the five main states, (USA, GB, FR, RU, and China), could use it to protect their great power status. Again this was paralysed via the East - West conflict, with one of the first decisions made by the UNSC was vetoed by the Soviet Union. (Number 3 failure). Etc. So as the SC has been unable to achieve its aims, then how could it be claimed to be effective.

The aim of peacekeeping is to provide a peaceful environment that will allow the parties to achieve a political settlement. There are a few problems with the UN peacekeeping sector. Member States only react promptly if the situation affects them or is within their own interests. As was shown in Rwanda 1994, when there was evidence of genocide, the UNSC decided that 5,500 peacekeepers were needed urgently. But it took nearly six months for the Member States to provide the troops, even though nineteen states had

pledged to keep 31,000 troops on stand by for UN peacekeeping. Alternatively with the imminent conflict in Iraq, 100-000 of troops have been sent to the Gulf in very short space of time. This has happened even with Member States expressing their views against this. The UN lacks the resources for mounting and managing big operations. Without troops of it's own, and only a minimal headquarters staff. During the Kosovo crisis 1999, UN showed their incompetence in resolving the situation. Ultimately NATO had to enter the equation and resolve the problem itself.

In conclusion, The UN can be described as a success or failure, depending on what organisation we compare it to. In terms of the LON, the UN could be claimed to be a success, as firstly it has been functioning for more than half a century. Which claim is not very long for a world organisation, but it's a longer period than the LON. Compared to NATO, it could be claimed to be a failure, as NATO has had to resolve situations that the UN has been unable to. I.e.-Kosovo, '99. But the UN is a multipurpose organisation, and has many more roles than NATO. Also in terms of IMF, WB, WHO and UNESCO it claim to be a success, but the appalling record of the ICJ, UNCS and Peacekeeping, it could be described as a failure.