P-ISSN: 2709-6254	Journal of Development and Social Sciences	March-April 2026, Vol. 7, No. 2
O-ISSN:2709-6262	https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2026(7-II)16	[169-181]

Journal of Development and Social Sciences
www.jdss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

The Role of United Nations in Promoting Peace & Security in the Middle East: A Case of Syria

[1] Dr. Sarah Syed Kazmi, [2] Ayesha and [3]Dr. Zahid Yaseen

1. Director QEC/HOD English, English, Fatimiyah Higher Education System, Karachi. Sind, Pakistan
2. MS Scholar, Department of Politics and International Relations, GC Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Associated professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, GC Women University Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: sarahkazmi@fhes.fen.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The ongoing war in Syria has posed a major challenges of the peace and security mandate of the United Nations. Since 2011, the conflict has involved state and non-state actors, regional and world powers and the massive humanitarian disasters as well as it has questioned the capability of international institutions in the context of managing complex crises. This study critically reviews the role of the United Nations in the Syrian conflict with the reference to the diplomatic, humanitarian and accountability efforts. This study rests on a qualitative approach of the case study analysis of UN-led processes, such as the Geneva peace process, cross-border humanitarian operations, and mechanisms of legal accountability, such as the Commission of Inquiry and International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM). Such interventions are evaluated in the paper in comparison with barriers of geopolitical transgression, including paralysis of the Security Council, vetoes, functional constraints, and regional power politics. The results indicate that despite contributions in humanitarian aid and norm-setting, the UN has been limited by structural weakness and political divisions, offering insights for scholars and policymakers.

KEYWORDS United Nations, Peace and Security, Syrian Conflict, Geneva Peace Process, Global Governance

Introduction

The creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 became a seminal event in the international relations and resulted into the formation of a global body with a mandate to eliminate the menace of war by adopting the power of solidarity and diplomacy. At the heart of its peace and security system are the Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter (Bellamy, 2015). Chapter VI addresses the settlement of contentious situations peacefully by the use of mediation, negotiation, and good offices whereas Chapter VII vests the Security Council with powers to use coercive actions such as economic sanctions and even military actions in the event peace is threatened or there is an act of aggression (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006). These are the legal foundation of the capability of the UN to intervene in crises in the international arena. In the past decades, UN has launched more than 70 peacekeeping and special political missions around the world, with varying success (Fortna, 2004). Whereas certain deployments in countries such as Namibia and El Salvador have been declared successful, others, like in Rwanda or Bosnia, have revealed the shortcomings of the UN system, especially in situations where there are political fracturing and limited mandates

The emergence of the conflict in Syria in 2011 put the UN once again in the spotlight of the global community and its ability to take decisive action in the event of humanitarian tragedy and geopolitical complexity (Doyle & Sambanis, 2006). What started as peaceful protests inspired by the Arab Spring- calling on democratic reforms and an end to authoritarian leadership under President Bashar Al-Assad, quickly degenerated into a full-blown civil war. Cruel repression of protestors and divided opposition combined with

foreign interference turned Syria into a field of conflicting ideologies, sectarian hatreds, and regional power politics (Fortna, 2004). On top of the government military and different rebel groups, extremist terrorist groups including ISIS and al-Nusra Front appeared, making the situation even more complicated. It was estimated in 2023 that there were over half a million people killed, and that over 13 million Syrian citizens displaced internally and as refugees elsewhere in the world (Hehir, 2012; UNHCR, 2022). Such staggering statistics make us remember how serious the humanitarian crisis is and how it has to be addressed efficiently by the international community.

The UN has tried to strike the compromise between respect to state sovereignty and its increasing normative pursuit of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in response to these challenges (Nuruzzaman, 2013). In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, R2P insists that the international community has the obligation to act in case of a state that is unable to protect its population against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (ICISS, 2001). Nonetheless, the inconsistent and selective use of R2P has caused the doubt among the scholars and practitioners about its effectiveness, particularly, in the case of Syria. Whereas R2P was used in Libya in 2011 resulting into military intervention by NATO, the same has not resulted to action in the Syrian context mainly because of the veto politics and fear of regime change (Sarkin, 2012; Evans, 2009).

Synthetically, the conflict in Syria is a source of an important case study of the changing role of the United Nations in the promotion of peace and security. It compels a reconsideration of principles of foundation, the capacities of operation and the normative commitments (De Waal, 2017). With the international community dealing with a growing instability beyond Syria, in Yemen and Sudan, Ukraine and Palestine, the experience of Syria should be reflected in the strategies of conflict prevention and resolution in the future. This study, thus, seeks to critically examine the role of the UN in Syria in the international law perspective, political and institutional perspective providing input in the current debates of the future of global governance and the collective security.

Literature Review

The factors that bring success to the UN peacekeeping missions have over the decades been strictly assessed by scholars. Doyle and Sambanis (2006) established that missions with strong mandates and adequate resources and the consent of parties to the conflict significantly decrease the chances of relapse of conflicts (Aboueldahab, 2018). Their cross-national quantitative study points out that the probability of the reoccurrence of violence is significantly reduced upon the presence of UN peacekeepers. This is complemented by a study by Fortna (2004) to the effect that long-term mission missions are positively associated with long-term peace with armed observer missions and traditional peacekeeping having the best results.

Meanwhile, an open assessment of UN failure in the 1990s, the Brahimi Report (2000) offered more aggressive mandates, quick deployable capabilities, and effective logistical support (Berti, 2016). These reforms were designed in such a way that would allow the UN to overcome the divide between the rhetoric power and the working credibility. However, practically, particularly in Syria, this blueprint is not implemented well. There was no consent-based framework and post-conflict stabilization mandate in Syria; and the security environment was fragmented, and access to humanitarian actors was uneven and unpredictable.

Meanwhile, an open assessment of UN failure in the 1990s, the Brahimi Report (2000) offered more aggressive mandates, quick deployable capabilities, and effective logistical support (Berti, 2016). These reforms were designed in such a way that would allow the UN to overcome the divide between rhetoric power and working credibility. However, practically, particularly in Syria, this blueprint is not implemented well. There was

no consent-based framework and post-conflict stabilization mandate in Syria; and the security environment was fragmented, and access to humanitarian actors was uneven and unpredictable.

More importantly, researchers note that in consent-base settings, powerful mandates and resources are the most important (Hinnebusch, 2012). The UN missions in the civil war in Syria did not find the right conditions to establish because there were constant hostilities and no political consensus. Doyle and Sambanis warn that peacekeeping should not be expected to work in a scenario where there are deeply entrenched civil war dynamics, particularly where there are parties that are not engaged in negotiation efforts. The long-term instability in Syria hence presents a bigger lesson that UN infantry is not sufficient to entrench peace without political agreement and well-organized systems

The concept of R2P, which was officially adopted at the 2005 World Summit, is based on three pillars including the state responsibility, international assistance, and collective international action in case the states fail then. It showed its normative power in Libya (2011), but failed to make a splash in Syria. Nuruzzaman (2014) does not blame normative ambiguity but P5 political unwillingness: "R2P comes to a standstill in Syria because Russia and China exercised their veto power to sink any action of significance" (Kaldor, 2012). It has been proved that several resolutions of the UNSC application of the R2P principles were vetoed despite strong humanitarian grounds.

Global Centre for R2P identified the inaugural veto by Russia and China in October 2011 as a triumph of impunity, indifference and injustice. Russia, especially, justified its vetoes as opposition to the precedent established by military intervention in Libya and the fear of the More importantly, researchers note that in consent-based settings, powerful mandates and resources are the most important (Hinnebusch, 2012; Yaseen, et al., 2019). The UN missions in the civil war in Syria did not find the right conditions to establish because there were constant hostilities and so-called regime change led by the West, not the denial of human rights infringements (Williams and Bellamy, 2012). The result implies that even legal requirements will not ease the action without the true political will, which is the failure at the core of the effectiveness of R2P.

The historic interventions in the Middle East by the UN, including the UNIFIL in Lebanon (1978) and UNDOF on the Golan Heights (1974), show patterns of similarity in the sense that external great powers influence neutrality of the UN. Falk and Makdessi (2009) believe that the external power interest in the region also continues to influence the UN peace missions in the region because they anchor the missions in grand strategic purposes.

Astana format arranged by Russia, Turkey and Iran, which emphasized military containment and de-escalation zones but marginalized democratic transition goals. Makdisi & Prashad (2017) note that the emphasis on sidelining the Geneva process on the value of political legitimacy was temporarily traded off by the success of Astana to mitigate violence. In that way, partnerships of regional powers (without UN leadership) have redefined the peace conditions in Syria, eliminating wider prospects of political solutions, which UN proposes.

UN cross-border humanitarian interventions (through UNSC Resolution 2165, 2014) demonstrates the risky spectrum of sovereignty and humanitarian neediness. Mertus & Weiss (2006, 2009) argue that humanitarian actors cannot be neutral when structural violence occurs e.g. siege and mass displacement (Council, 2015). In Syria, restriction to access and politicization of aid delivery by the regime worsened civilian plight.

According to the report in the Guardian (2016) the UN officials deleted the word siege in OCHA reports under the pressure of the regime, which is evidence of the loss of informational independence. In addition, the research on cross-border aid has observed

how the operational effectiveness of UNSC amendments was being curtailed more by vetoes rather than by humanitarian principles. Therefore, even though the will of Resolution 2165, the practice of cross-border delivery of assistance was trapped in international politics at the expense of its normative and practical scope.

In Syria, the UN has introduced a series of envoys Kofi Annan (2011), Lakhdar Brahimi (2012), Staffan de Mistura (2014-2018), Geir Pedersen (2019-present). Both sought political structures and focused on ceasefire agreements and provided an indirect negotiation process through Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) that detailed a political transition roadmap (Hehir, 2013). Nevertheless, limited results have been recorded despite these repeated efforts. According to the institutional reviews by Cambridge Core, envoys were limited by small mandates that mandated consensus and thus ceasefires could not be imposed and inclusion of opposition could not be achieved. Geneva process itself lacked the impetus of on-ground repression and outside military campaigns- which is why de Mistura had to work with localized and short term humanitarian breaks, as opposed to a comprehensive peace agenda (Slim, 2015).

Material and Methods

This study is a qualitative research study, which is adopted based on a case study approach, to critically analyze the role of the United Nations in promoting peace and security in Syria. Case study method is particularly applicable in complex conflicts where politics, laws, and geopolitics convergee allowing an in-depth examination of institutional practices, policy choices, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. The methodology manages to combine various analytical lenses to give a broad context of the intervention of the UN in Syria. The first approach is a legal analysis of the documents that underline UN action, Chapters VI and VII, and international law doctrines of non-intervention, sovereignty, and humanitarian access. Second, the fast-changing dynamics of the conflict in Syria imply that some data might become obsolete soon or might represent the situation that no longer holds now of analysis. Despite these limitations can enable an evidence-intensive, context-specific analysis and supports critical evaluation of international intervention and global governance mechanism.

Result and Discussion

Syrian conflict was quickly turning into a proxy war between world powers, starting as a domestic revolt. The most prominent external players included the United States, Russia, and a number of Western allies, such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada (Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Yaseen, et. al., 2018). These actors with their different strategic interests and ideology on worldviews participated in the war in a critical manner affecting the direction of the war both militarily, diplomatically and economically. Their participation gave the region a superpower aspect to the complicated situation in the region, making finding the solution to the conflict more difficult, and cutting down the efficacy of the multilateral diplomacy foundation, including the United Nations.

UN Responses: Initial Diplomatic and Humanitarian Steps

As the main multilateral organization that is set with the task of supporting the international peace and security, the United Nations reacted to the eruption of the Syrian conflict by a series of diplomatic and humanitarian efforts (Slim, 2015). Since the very beginning of the crisis in 2011, the UN tried to de-escalate the tensions, find a common ground and improve the humanitarian situation that was getting worse day after day. These early initiatives were however slowed down by political fragmentation in the Security Council, logistical barriers on the ground as well as the changing nature of the conflict. The reaction of the UN at this time can shed some light on the potential and the constraint of multilateral diplomacy in the face of a quickly unraveling civil war.

Early Diplomatic Approach

The UN was very diplomatic in addressing the Syrian uprising initially. When the demonstrations turned into violent clashes between the crowd and security forces of the state, the Secretary-General of the UN made statements appealing to calm, negotiations and change (Roberts, 2008). But the Syrian government turned a deaf ear on such calls and intensified its military crackdown.

Since the UN appreciated the shortcomings of public diplomacy, it attempted to resolve the conflict by deploying high profile envoys. In February 2012, the UN and the Arab League appointed former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy on Syria. His peace plan included a six-point plan that was composed of the following, ceasefire, humanitarian access, detainee's release, and Syrian-led political process. Although, at first, the Syrian government and opposition supported the plan, it soon collapsed under the weight of constant violence, the absence of any means of enforcing the plan, and the suspicion between conflicting sides (Mello, 2014).

After the resignation of Annan in August 2012, Lakhdar Brahimi took over as Special Envoy. Brahimi also attempted to revive international agreement by the Geneva II Conference in 2014, which gathered the representatives of the Syrian government and a part of opposition. But basic differences on whether to keep Assad, the meaning of terrorism and the order of political reforms derailed the talks. These initial diplomatic efforts were not very successful due to the absence of trust and the involvement of outside powers and the rise of jihadist movements.

Internal divisions in the UN Security Council also delayed the early mediation efforts by the UN (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). Whereas western powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France demanded the resignation of Assad, Russia and China favored the independence of Syria and did not want the external interference. These factions led to vetoed draft resolutions numerous times on sanctioning or authorizing the use of coercive policies. Not only was the political influence of the UN curtailed by the gridlock in the Security Council, but this also gave some mixed messages to the fighting groups on the ground.

Competitive Diplomatic Tracks

Along with the UN based processes several parallel diplomatic initiatives began to appear only compounding the disunity of the peace situation. In 2017, the Astana process was initiated by Russia, Iran, and Turkey, with its aim being the establishment of de-escalation zones and the local ceasefire. Although they brought temporary violence eruptions, these initiatives avoided the UN framework and excluded opposition groups that were not on the same side with the sponsors (Duursma, 2020).

Other initiatives like the Sochi Conference, and backchannel talks were also too narrow-focused and illegitimate. Such conflicting tracks not only caused perplexity over the diplomatic agenda but also undermined the mandate of the UN Special Envoy and the Geneva process (Acharya, 2017). Because of this, there was a continuous loss of momentum towards a fully inclusive, comprehensive, and internationally backed peace settlement.

Kofi Annan Six-Point Plan

The Six-Point Peace Plan initiated by Kofi Annan, the UN and Arab League Joint Special Envoy in 2012 was one of the first significant diplomatic initiatives. The initiative envisaged a prompt cease-fire, removal of heavy weapons in towns and cities, unhindered access to humanitarian organizations, the release of arbitrarily held persons and the

movement of journalists. Paper by paper, the strategy was detailed and harmonious with the humanitarian issues along with the sovereign negotiation concept.

At first, the Assad government had a nominal support to the plan as did elements within the opposition. Nonetheless, there were widespread violations of the ceasefire on the ground. The distrust among the parties, as well as the absence of the mechanism providing the enforcement, made the initiative ineffective (Khosla, 2014). The United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) sent to ensure adherence was also as fruitless as violence broke out soon after the observers were deployed. By the month of August, in 2012, Annan threw up his hands in frustration, on the basis that there was no international unity and the conflict was being militarized, which was a significant setback.

Geneva I and Geneva II conferences

A new diplomatic effort was initiated to rescue the peace process under the auspice of the Geneva Conferences led by the successor of Annan, Lakhdar Brahimi. In June 2012, the Geneva I Conference issued a communique that demanded the formation of a transitional governing body to be composed of both regime and opposition members to oversee a negotiated political settlement. The communiqu was however silent on the future role of Assad which left each side to interpret the deal in a way that favored their stand.

The Geneva Conference II, held in January and February 2014, included the representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition and the international stakeholders. The negotiations however soon collapsed (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). The regime was not willing to negotiate about any kind of transition in which Assad could leave, and the opposition was not ready to negotiate unless Assad was brought down immediately. Such incompatibilities of positions, together with persistent military attacks and absence of ceasefire in the field, resulted in a standstill. The Geneva II failure strengthened the doubts regarding the possibility of a diplomatic solution without any serious compromises or external support pressure.

Failure of Early Peace Initiatives

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the United Nations and other global players made a lot of diplomatic efforts to find a compromise (Bensahel, 2007). Notwithstanding their good intentions and their diplomatically high-mindedness, these efforts always failed to achieve a sustainable ceasefire or a viable road map toward political transition. The unsuccessful nature of these initial peace efforts can be explained as a combination of several factors, such as intransigence of the conflict parties, fragmentation of the opposition, regional and world powers involvement, and the lack of enforcement mechanisms in the international system. A combination of these factors revealed the shortcomings of international mediation in a highly polarized and militarized conflict setting.

Humanitarian disaster and escalation

With the diplomatic process failing and military battles raging, the Syrian war became one of the worst humanitarian crises witnessed over the recent past. The peaceful demonstrations that had started, turned into a long lasting war between regime army, opposition forces, jihadist groups and foreign armies. There has been a grave human cost to this complex war, both in terms of sheer numbers and psychological and structural damage wreaked throughout Syria (Chandler, 2004).

The humanitarian crisis escalated very quickly since the conflict had extended to the main cities such as Aleppo, Homs, and suburbs of Damascus. Civilians were often killed in cross fire of the opposing forces or being targeted intentionally. Siege warfare, barrel bombs, chemical weapons, and random shelling became the trademarks of the conflict. Whole

districts were turned to ruins, hospitals and educational establishments were shelled, and vital facilities (water supply, electrical networks, etc.) were destroyed systematically (Thakur, 2011). War crimes and crimes against humanity were imposed on both the Syrian government and different armed groups.

The international community was alarmed by chemical weapons attacks in, among others, the Ghouta (2013), Khan Sheikhoun (2017) and Douma (2018) as it was condemned by many governments and human rights groups. These events not only brought out the atrocity of the war but also proved the inability of international mechanisms to arrest or hold to account such acts. In spite of some attempts to destroy the chemical weapons of Syria, the cases of its further use were reported, which led to further undermining the trust in the implementation of international norms.

Internal displacement crisis was the first of its kind (Chandler, 2004). UN records show that more than 6.8 million were internally displaced in Syria, and over 6.6 million had become refugees leaving Syria to foreign countries, many of whom had gone to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, as well as Europe and other regions. The countries receiving them were unable to cope with the numbers, which burdened their economy, infrastructure, and social stability. There were also dramatic political implications of the refugee crisis, particularly in Europe, where it affected the outcome of elections and changed the politics of migration, security, and humanitarian responsibility.

Children were the ones who suffered most (Patrick, 2014). Millions lost access to education, suffered violence, or became members of armed forces. Malnutrition, illness, and injury became rampant, and those who survived the war will have lasting effects on Syria after the war. Generations will have to live with the psychological traumas that years of war, loss and displacement have caused.

Its economic effect was no less devastating. Between 2010 and 2020, the GDP of Syria reduced by more than 60 percent. The Syrian agricultural production that once was a foundation of the Syrian economy collapsed because of drought, war damage, and loss of labor. A similar destruction was done to the urban economies (Mazurana et al, 2013). The reconstruction costs are pegged at hundreds of billions of dollars and many places are inaccessible or under insecure governance

The world humanitarian reaction to this crisis, spearheaded by the United Nations and its organizations, was heroic and handcuffed. Aid agencies operated under harsh conditions such as low funding and lack of access and political blockage. An operation was put in place in 2014 to deliver cross-border aid, of which it was possible to deliver some in opposition-held territory, but which over time was eroded by Russian and Chinese resistance in the UN Security Council so that fewer authorized border crossings took place.

Amidst these challenges, UN agencies including the World Food Programme, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WHO were able to provide lifesaving support to millions (Zahar, 2012). They offered food, shelter, clean water, and medical care as well as education support. The role of the local Syrian NGOs and international partners was essential in ground implementation of such programs. But demands were always more than the resources.

The intensity of the war also caused the collapse of the traditional law and order. Most of the areas were conquered by the non-state players who enforced their legal framework and governance structures (Johnstone, 2011). This pluralism of law regularly interfered with international human rights, especially in the fields of women rights, due process, and religious freedom. This was coupled by the loss of the rule of law and the spread of impunity which f Overall, the humanitarian disaster in Syria is not just some unfortunate side effect of the war but rather one of its main characteristics (Clapham, 2000). Targeting

of the civilian population, the employment of starvation as a weapon, and the obliteration of the civilian infrastructure are all the breaches of international law and morality. Such trends of violence also indicate that the international community has failed to offer sufficient protection, and to bring people to justice.

Political processes and Diplomatic Mediation

The United Nations has as one of its central mandates, to resolve international and intra-state conflicts by peaceful means. In Syria, this mandate has become a reality in the form of a number of political initiatives, the most significant of which are the Geneva peace process and the work of both UN Special Envoys (Anderson, 2012). These efforts were meant to stop violence and initiate a political transition that was credible by engaging the Syrian government, the representatives of the opposition, and the global stakeholders in a dialogue.

Nevertheless, a variety of factors complicated diplomacy in Syria right at the beginning of the process: the reluctance of the Syrian regime to the idea of a political transition; the disunity of the opposition; the rise of extremist forces; and contradictory interests of some of the most important external parties, such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, and Gulf states. The UN was often left in a middle, trying to mediate a peace process, where not many participants were interested in compromise (Aoláin et al, 2011).

Humanitarian Ceasefires and Access Mechanisms

The humanitarian aspect of UN work in Syria has been rather critical and even controversial. When the war transformed into a humanitarian disaster on a colossal scale, the UN was called upon to carry humanitarian aid, negotiate humanitarian corridors, and establish temporary ceasefires to provide humanitarian assistance and the safety of civilians (Chandler, 2004).

Structural and Political Limitations

The United Nations has been frustrated multiple times by structural and political limitations that prevented its ability to prevent violence, implement agreements, or provide consistent support despite its diverse attempts in Syria (Muller & Bashar, 2017). Such constraints are not specific to Syria but have been particularly dramatic in this fighting because of the magnitude of the foreign interventions and the heat of geopolitical confrontations

Great Power rivalry and Security Council Veto

The most quoted barrier has been the veto in the UN Security Council. In the duration of the conflict, Russia, aided by China, has blocked at least 17 resolutions Structural and Political Limitations Syria, including the use of sanctions, referral to the ICC, condemnation of chemical attacks and humanitarian access (Nuruzzaman, 2013). Such vetoes have successfully nullified the role of the Council in crisis management turning it into a stage of big power rivalry.

The recurrent vetoing of resolutions has not only stalled the legal, coercive actions as stipulated in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, but also discredited the role of the UN as a neutral decision maker. To a great number of observers, Syria is the failure of the Security Council to perform its core mandate of world peace and security (Morris, 2013). The failure has empowered perpetrators on the ground and the message has been passed that accountability is a negotiable issue when a powerful ally is in the way.

It is also an expression of a wider geopolitical rift between the western liberal system and emerging or resurgent powers such as Russia and China. In Syria, it resulted in radically opposite stances: the West supported the regime change and human rights, and Russia and China promoted sovereignty and stability. This resulted in a diplomatic standoff where nothing could be concluded without being diluted into uselessness or being put to non-binding forums (Reus- Smit, 2007).

Ground Challenges in Operations

With the diplomatic impasse, the UN was experiencing issues of severe operations in Syria. The regime consistently refused humanitarian access, made it a bartering tool or politically used it. Relief vessels were re-routed, delayed or even bombed. The Syrian government was often asked to agree to the terms by the UN agencies in which it was to control the distribution hence limiting access to areas occupied by the opposition or besieged (Paris, 2014).

In the areas where the opposition or the extremists were in control, the UN has faced problems of security, bad governance and dis-coordination. Negotiations were very dangerous and uncertain due to the existence of numerous armed groups. Most of these groups did not acknowledge the authority of UN or even accepted it in its entirety (Luck, 2006).

In addition, the structural reliance of the UN on the permission of host states implied that it tended to act under the regime-determined conditions. This generated impressions of prejudice and moral concerns of complicity especially when aid was deployed to entrench regime power or lock out opposition populations. Such ground-level limitations have hampered the efficiency of the UN not only in Syria but also in many zones of conflicts where the sovereignty excuse is used to prevent international intervention (Makdisi and Prashad, 2017). The Syria experience is indicative of a more autonomous and secure access mechanisms such as improved remote delivery tools, regional coordination and early warning systems.

Conclusion

Syrian conflict has left a painful scar not only on the Syrian people but also on the international system as well. It has been a war of contradictions to the United Nations; it was active but not effective, visible but limited, normative without being enforcing. This chapter has shown that the Syrian case can provide fruitful lessons in the future engagements, especially in the Middle East region where regional politics, armed non-state actors, and international rivalries tend to interfere with peacebuilding activities (Yaseen, et al., 2023; Chesterman, 2011).

The UN can improve its crisis preparedness by transforming its institutions, perfecting strategies, and adopting less rigid forms of operation. The organization should not just ponder on what went wrong in Syria, they should take a decisive step of ensuring that it does not go wrong anywhere. Only then will the UN be able to regain its original historic role as a peaceful keeper and a protector of human dignity in the most intractable conflicts.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned in Syria, this section provides certain recommendations on how to improve peace and security operations of the UN in the future in the Middle East and other multifaceted regions.

UN Security Council Reform

The failure of the Security Council to effectively intervene in Syria shows the necessity to reform the structure. Although complete expansion or abolition of veto may be politically impossible, the following proposals could be proposed:

A voluntary code of conduct between the members of P5 not to use the veto in mass atrocities cases (Bensahel, 2007) Creation of a responsibility to act protocol that will enable the general assembly, or coalitions of regional groups to seek intervention when the council is at a stalemate.

The establishment of a commission that is independent to review the failure of the Security Council to act and publish its recommendations.

Such actions would not solve the problem of the veto but would make the process more open and morally pressurize the permanent members to prove their deeds.

Enhancing Special Envoys Mandate and Resources

The work of Special Envoys in Syria has been weak and they have been marginalized by regional powers with no enforcement powers. UN ought to (Bellinger, 2012):

Build strong support staff, legal instruments and enforcement to the envoys.

Give envoys the authority to work directly with non-state actors with a defined set of rules of engagement.

Facilitate continuity among various envoys through institutionalization of knowledge transfer in addition to maintaining diplomatic momentum.

The future mediation procedures can be stagnation-free with more investment in the capacity and independence of envoys.

Humanitarian Access and Neutrality

The UN has to:

Develop emergency humanitarian access procedures in accordance with the international humanitarian law, with or without consent.

Ramp-up remote monitoring and verify system to guarantee the delivery of aid to its targeted beneficiaries (Bellamy and Dunne, 2016).

Fund and shield local NGOs and community-based organizations and minimize dependence on state-affiliated delivery networks.

These changes have the potential to enhance humanitarian results, and strengthen the concept of impartiality.

Incorporation of Civil Society and Local Actors

Missing the chance to involve Syrian civil society in official negotiations was the fault. The UN ought to in future engagements:

Establish official civil society consultative committees to the negotiation tracks. Provide funding to women-led, youth-led and marginalized community organizations to make peacebuilding inclusive.

Give precedence to local governance and bottom-up stabilization, especially where extremist groups or state neglect have been pushed out of power (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004).

Such actors are usually more legitimate and more contextually aware than exiled political elites.

References

Aboueldahab, N. (2018). Transitional justice policy in authoritarian contexts: The case of Syria. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 12*(2), 215–232.

Acharya, A. (2017). After liberal hegemony: The advent of a multiplex world order. *Ethics & International Affairs, 31*(3), 271–285.

Barnett, M., & Finnemore, M. (2004). *Rules for the world: International organizations in global politics.* Cornell University Press.

Bellamy, A. J. (2015). *The responsibility to protect: A defense*. Oxford University Press.

Bellamy, A. J., & Dunne, T. (2016). R2P in practice: Political will and collective action. *Global Responsibility to Protect, 8*(2–3), 129–152.

Bensahel, N. (2007). A coalition of coalitions: International cooperation against terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 30*(1), 35–49.

Berti, B. (2016). Non-state actors and conflict mediation. *International Review of the Red Cross, 98*(2), 495–512.

Brahimi, L. (2000). *Report of the panel on United Nations peace operations*.

Doyle, M. W., & Sambanis, N. (2006). Making war and building peace. Princeton University Press.

Fortna, V. P. (2004). Does peacekeeping keep peace*? International Studies Quarterly, 48*(2), 269–292.

Hehir, A. (2013). The permanence of inconsistency. *International Security, 38*(1), 137–159.

Hinnebusch, R. (2012). Syria: From authoritarian upgrading to revolution? *International Affairs, 88*(1), 95–113.

Kaldor, M. (2012). *New and old wars* (3rd ed.). Polity Press.

Keating, T., & Knight, A. (2004). *Building sustainable peace*. United Nations University Press.

Khosla, D. (2014). R2P after Libya and Syria. *The Washington Quarterly, 36*(2), 61–76.

Luck, E. C. (2006). *UN Security Council: Practice and promise.* Routledge.

Mello, P. A. (2014). Evaluating R2P in Syria. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 27*(2), 213–235.

Morris, J. (2013). Libya and Syria: R2P. *International Affairs, 89*(5), 1265–1283.

Müller, T. R., & Bashar, Z. (2017). UN humanitarian coordination. *Disasters, 41*(4), 587–605.

Nuruzzaman, M. (2013). R2P: Revived in Libya, buried in Syria. *Insight Turkey, 15*(2), 57–66.

Paris, R. (2014). Structural problems of humanitarian intervention. *International Peacekeeping, 21*(5), 569–603.

Reus-Smit, C. (2007). International crises of legitimacy. *International Politics, 44*(2), 157–174.

Slim, H. (2015). *Humanitarian ethics.* Oxford University Press.

Thakur, R. (2011). *The responsibility to protect.* Routledge.

Williams, P. D., & Bellamy, A. J. (2012). Libya and R2P. *G*lobal *Governance, 18*(3), 273–297.

Yaseen, Z., Muzaffar, M., & Naeem, S. (2019). Resurgence of Russia: A case Study of Syrian Crisis, *Journal of Politics and International Studies, 5* (II), 147-154

Yaseen, Z., Muzaffar, M., & Naseem, F. (2018). Syrian War in the Context of National and International Aspects: An Analysis, *Pakistan Languages and Humanity Review, 2*(1), 15-27

Yaseen, Z., Muzaffar, M., & Tariq, K. (2023). Impacts of Saudi-Israel Relations on the Middle East: An Analysis, *Political Studies, 30*(1), 17–27