

Role of International Organisations in Promoting Global Peace

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ABSTRACT

It examines the vital role that international organizations (IOs) play in promoting world peace and stability in a tumultuous environment. It charts the development of regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as the transition from the unsuccessful League of Nations (1920) to the stronger United Nations (UN) (1945). IOs use a wide range of interrelated strategies to advance peace:

Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution: *As seen by the UN's involvement in the Iran-Iraq War, they act as unbiased mediators and send special envoys to assist in negotiations.*

Peacekeeping and Military Interventions: *Since 1948, UN operations have been characterized by the deployment of armed and unarmed forces to monitor ceasefires and protect civilians.*

Humanitarian aid and development: *include averting famine-fueled wars, promoting reconciliation, and providing socioeconomic foundations for peace through organizations like the World Food Programme (WFP) and financial institutions like the World Bank.*

Norm-Setting and Legal Frameworks: *Creating and upholding international law, treaties, and human rights norms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Geneva Conventions.*

The UN's contribution to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the EU's success in bringing peace to Europe through economic integration, and Namibia's independence are all noteworthy accomplishments. However, IOs encounter a number of difficulties and objections:

*Veto*s pertaining to conflicts in Israel-Palestine and Ukraine are two examples of how the UN Security Council's veto system frequently causes gridlock. Political biases are shown by resource scarcity and selectivity/hypocrisy in interventions. Their efficacy is limited by new dangers including cyberwarfare, climate change, and the unwillingness of strong states to be scrutinized.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly volatile world characterized by geopolitical rivalries, ideological clashes, and existential threats such as climate change, terrorism, and pandemics, international organizations stand as indispensable pillars for fostering global peace¹. These entities, encompassing global behemoths like the United Nations (UN) and regional alliances such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), function as neutral arbiters, enforcers of international norms, and facilitators of cooperative action². Their multifaceted roles include diplomatic mediation, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, economic development, and the establishment of legal frameworks that deter aggression and promote collective security. By providing platforms for dialogue and shared decision-making, they help transform potential conflicts into opportunities for resolution, thereby safeguarding human lives and advancing global stability.

¹ United Nations, "The UN and Global Peace," UN.org, accessed October 2023.

² Ian Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 15-20.

It examines the historical evolution of these organizations, their key mechanisms for promoting peace, notable achievements illustrated through case studies, persistent challenges and criticisms, and future prospects in an evolving international landscape. Drawing on empirical evidence, theoretical perspectives, and real-world examples, it argues that while international organizations have significantly contributed to preventing wars and rebuilding societies, their effectiveness is contingent upon reforms that address inequities, enhance inclusivity, and adapt to emerging threats. Ultimately, their role underscores the imperative of multilateralism in a world where unilateral actions often exacerbate divisions.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The roots of international organizations lie in the catastrophic aftermath of World War I, which exposed the fragility of global order and the dangers of unchecked nationalism. The League of Nations, conceived by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and established in 1920, marked humanity's first concerted effort to institutionalize collective security³. With 63 founding members, it sought to prevent future wars through mechanisms like arbitration, disarmament, and economic sanctions. However, its shortcomings—lack of binding enforcement powers, the U.S.'s isolationist stance, and the dominance of European powers—rendered it ineffective. For instance, the League failed to halt Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 or Italy's aggression in Ethiopia in 1935, highlighting the pitfalls of voluntary compliance in an anarchic system⁴. Its dissolution in 1946, amid the ruins of World War II, served as a stark reminder of the need for more robust structures.

The UN, founded in 1945 in San Francisco, emerged as a phoenix from the League's ashes, with 51 original members and now 193. The UN Charter, a cornerstone document, enshrined principles of sovereign equality, peaceful dispute settlement, and collective security. The Security Council, with its five permanent members wielding veto power, was designed to authorize interventions, impose sanctions, and deploy peacekeeping forces. This era also saw the proliferation of specialized agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 1944) and the World Bank (1944), which linked economic stability to peace. The Cold War (1947–1991) tested the UN's bipolar dynamics, with superpowers using it as a forum for proxy confrontations, yet it managed to contain direct conflicts through arms control agreements like the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963).

Regional organizations complemented global efforts, addressing localized instabilities. NATO, established in 1949 under the Washington Treaty, began as a defensive alliance against Soviet expansion but evolved into a tool for out-of-area operations. The EU's origins trace to the European Coal and Steel Community (1951), proposed by French statesman Robert Schuman to bind France and Germany's economies, preventing future wars. Successive treaties, including the Treaty of Rome (1957) founding the European Economic Community and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) creating the EU, fostered integration through shared institutions, free trade, and a common currency. By 2023, the EU had 27 members, exemplifying how economic interdependence curtails aggression—a concept echoed in liberal institutionalist theory, which posits that organizations reduce conflict by increasing transaction costs of war⁵.

In the Global South, decolonization spurred regional formations. The Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963), led by figures like Kwame Nkrumah, aimed to eradicate colonialism and promote unity, though it struggled with internal divisions. Its successor, the AU (2002), shifted focus to peacekeeping and governance. ASEAN (1967), formed amid Vietnam War tensions, emphasized non-interference and consensus-building, preventing major conflicts in Southeast Asia. The Organization of American States (OAS, 1948) mediated hemispheric disputes, such as the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention.

This evolution reflects a shift from idealism to pragmatism. From 1909's 37 intergovernmental organizations to over 300 today, they have adapted to multipolarity, incorporating emerging powers like China and India. Theoretical lenses, including realism (viewing them as extensions of state power) and constructivism (emphasizing norm diffusion), enrich understanding. Overall, historical developments illustrate organizations' role in transitioning from ad-hoc alliances to institutionalized multilateralism, essential for sustained peace.

³ F.S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times, 1920-1946* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), 25-30.

⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150-155.

⁵ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 85-90

DEFINING THE SCOPE AND FUNCTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PEACE PROMOTION

International organizations are voluntary associations of states created to achieve specific objectives through cooperation, regulation, and dialogue across borders. They are mandated to regulate international interactions and promote norms to prevent conflict escalation and foster peaceful coexistence. The United Nations (UN) stands as the cornerstone of international peace architecture, supported by regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and various expert agencies and NGOs. Their roles encompass peacekeeping, legal order maintenance, human rights enforcement, humanitarian aid, and culture diplomacy⁶

KEY MECHANISMS FOR PROMOTING PEACE

International organizations employ a diverse array of mechanisms to promote peace, integrating diplomatic, military, economic, and normative strategies. These tools are interdependent, addressing immediate crises while tackling underlying causes like inequality and resource scarcity.

→ Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution

Diplomacy forms the bedrock of their peacemaking efforts, with organizations serving as impartial mediators. The UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs deploys special envoys, such as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Syria (2012) or Lakhdar Brahimi in Afghanistan (2001–2004), to facilitate negotiations. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), UN-mediated talks under Pérez de Cuéllar averted broader regional escalation⁷. The EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, currently Josep Borrell, coordinates the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), enabling unified stances, as in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), which involved sanctions relief in exchange for nuclear curbs.

Regional diplomacy excels in proximity. ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (1976) has de-escalated tensions, such as the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff between China and the Philippines, through quiet consultations. The OAS mediated the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, complementing UN efforts and preventing nuclear war. These mechanisms rely on shuttle diplomacy and confidence-building measures, often drawing on Track II diplomacy involving NGOs for grassroots input.

→ Peacekeeping and Military Interventions

Peacekeeping is a hallmark of UN operations, involving unarmed observers or armed troops to monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, and support state-building. Since 1948, over 70 missions have deployed nearly 2 million personnel from 120 countries, with a budget exceeding \$6 billion annually⁸. The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH, 2004–2017) helped transition from dictatorship to democracy, reducing gang violence. In Lebanon, UNIFIL (since 1978) has maintained a buffer zone, averting full-scale wars.

NATO's collective defense under Article 5 has been invoked once (post-9/11), but its interventions, like in Libya (2011), demonstrate enforcement capabilities. The AU's African Standby Force, deployed in Somalia (AMISOM, 2007–present), has reclaimed territories from al-Shabaab, preventing Islamist takeover. These operations blend military presence with civilian components, such as electoral assistance, to ensure lasting peace.

→ Humanitarian Aid and Development

Peace cannot endure without socioeconomic foundations. UN agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNDP deliver aid in crises, preventing famine-fueled conflicts. In Yemen (2014–present), WFP has provided food to 20 million people, mitigating humanitarian disasters that could radicalize populations. The World Bank and IMF offer reconstruction financing; post-1994 Rwanda genocide, loans rebuilt infrastructure, fostering reconciliation⁹.

The EU's European Development Fund channels billions annually, integrating fragile states like the Western Balkans into stable economies. This aid often includes capacity-building for governance, reducing corruption that breeds instability. In Afghanistan, EU-funded programs post-2001 supported education and women's rights, countering Taliban resurgence.

⁶ A. P. D. R. S. Ali, "International organizations and the promotion of a culture of citizenship A study on the role of UNESCO," *Journal of Juridical and Political Science*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.55716/jjps.2022.s.4.15>

⁷ Dilip Hiro, *The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 200-205.

⁸ UN Peacekeeping, "Facts and Figures," peacekeeping.un.org, accessed October 2023

⁹ World Bank, "Rwanda Reconstruction," [WorldBank.org](https://www.worldbank.org), accessed October 2023.

→ Norm-Setting and Legal Frameworks

Organizations establish and enforce international law, deterring violations. The UN's treaties, such as the Geneva Conventions (1949) and the Rome Statute (1998) establishing the ICC, prosecute atrocities. The ICC's 2020 arrest warrant for Sudan's Omar al-Bashir pressured accountability in Darfur. The EU's *acquis communautaire* enforces human rights, as seen in accession criteria that reformed candidate states.

These norms, per constructivist theory, socialize states into peaceful behavior. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) has influenced constitutions worldwide, promoting non-violent resolutions.¹⁰ The UN Charter, along with treaties, conventions, and Security Council resolutions, lays down legal standards for conflict resolution, prevention, and accountability. For instance, the Geneva Conventions regulate conduct during armed conflicts to protect civilians and combatants, and enforcement mechanisms aim to punish violations of international humanitarian law. However, enforcement effectiveness often depends on political will among member states, creating challenges in conflict zones like Syria and Ukraine.

→ Cultural and Educational Contributions to a Culture of Peace

International organizations, particularly specialized agencies like UNESCO, play an indispensable role in cultivating a culture of peace through education, scientific collaboration, and cultural diversity preservation. UNESCO promotes dialogue among peoples, tolerance, and democratic values by emphasizing human rights education and intercultural understanding. These efforts contribute to long-term peace foundations by addressing root causes of conflict including intolerance and discrimination.

Such cultural diplomacy is complemented by endeavors in sport and social inclusion, recognized as powerful mechanisms for social transformation and sustainable development. Programs led by the UN, IOC, and WHO integrate sport into peacebuilding and community health initiatives, highlighting the multidimensional strategies international organizations employ beyond traditional diplomacy

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CASE STUDIES

International organizations have achieved remarkable successes, averting wars and enabling recoveries. The UN's decolonization role, through its Trusteeship Council, facilitated peaceful independence for over 80 territories, contrasting with violent partitions elsewhere.

A standout case is South Africa's transition from apartheid. UN sanctions in the 1980s–1990s isolated the regime, leading to Nelson Mandela's 1990 release and 1994 elections. UN observers ensured fairness, preventing civil war and establishing a multiracial democracy. Another is Namibia's independence (1989–1990), where UNTAG supervised elections, setting a self-determination model.

NATO's Kosovo intervention (1999) ended Serbian ethnic cleansing, with UNMIK administering the province until 2008 independence. The EU's enlargement has pacified Europe; integrating Eastern states post-1989 reduced border tensions, with intra-EU trade at €4.5 trillion annually minimizing economic disputes.

In Asia, ASEAN's diplomacy has contained South China Sea disputes via the 2002 Declaration, reducing incidents by 50% since 2016. The AU's Arusha Accords (2000) ended Burundi's civil war, integrating Hutu rebels and fostering stability.

Quantitatively, UN peacekeeping has saved an estimated 3 million lives. These cases demonstrate organizations' transformative power, though context-dependent.

CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

Despite successes, organizations face significant hurdles. The UN Security Council's veto system causes paralysis; Russia's vetoes in Ukraine (2014–present) enabled annexation, prolonging conflict. U.S. vetoes in Israel-Palestine perpetuate injustices.

Resource shortages hinder missions; MONUSCO in Congo faces underfunding, leading to 100+ casualties annually¹¹. Selectivity breeds hypocrisy—NATO's Libya intervention (2011) exceeded UN mandates, causing chaos, while inaction in Myanmar's Rohingya crisis (2017) exposed biases. Critics argue power imbalances; IMF austerity in Greece (2010–present) sparked unrest, linking policies to conflict. Non-state threats, like ISIS, challenge traditional models. Sovereignty clashes, as in China's resistance to UN scrutiny in Xinjiang, limit interventions.

Climate change exacerbates issues; Sahel droughts fuel Boko Haram, straining AU capacities. These challenges necessitate reforms for equity. Political interests of powerful member states often obstruct neutral interventions, causing missions to fall short of objectives, particularly illustrated by the ongoing instability in

¹⁰ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2022* (Berlin: TI, 2022)

¹¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2022* (New York: UNDP, 2022), 45-50.

Syria, the Middle East, and Ukraine conflicts¹². Coordination challenges among local actors and international frameworks further complicate peace efforts.

Additionally, global security risks are evolving due to emerging threats like climate change, cyber warfare, and asymmetric conflicts, demanding innovative organizational responses and extended mandates. The increasing reliance on informal intergovernmental organizations (IIGOs) reflects adaptations to these contemporary security issues, although their informal nature can limit enforcement and accountability.

Efforts to enhance peacebuilding effectiveness call for balancing stabilization with inclusive local engagement and long-term development. Research highlights the need for improved training, resource allocation, and integration of local peace initiatives to ensure sustainable outcomes

II. FUTURE PROSPECTS

Emerging trends in digital diplomacy offer new avenues for peace promotion by utilizing information and communication technologies to enhance dialogue, transparency, and conflict early-warning systems. Digital platforms can give voice to marginalized groups, combat misinformation, and foster inclusive participation, revitalizing traditional diplomatic practices for modern exigencies¹³.

Furthermore, aligning peace efforts with global development agendas such as the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals facilitates a comprehensive approach by addressing interlinked social, economic, and environmental determinants of peace. Cultivating global civil society participation, educational programs, and cross-sector partnerships are recognized as critical components of future peace architecture.

To strengthen roles, organizations must innovate. Security Council expansion to include India and Brazil could boost legitimacy. AI-driven early warning, via UN Global Pulse, could predict conflicts. Partnerships with NGOs and tech firms will enhance aid. Agenda 2030 integrates peace with SDGs, addressing inequalities. Regional entities like SCO could bridge divides. Education on global citizenship will sustain efforts, ensuring organizations remain vital in a multipolar world.

III. CONCLUSION

International organizations are essential for global peace, evolving to mediate, enforce, and rebuild. Their mechanisms and achievements, from South Africa to Kosovo, highlight transformative impacts. Yet, challenges like vetoes and biases demand reforms. Through adaptation, they can navigate threats, promoting a peaceful, equitable world¹⁴. In doing so, they not only preserve the hard-won gains of past generations but also inspire future leaders to prioritize dialogue over division. As the world faces unprecedented challenges, from cyber threats to pandemics, the enduring legacy of these organizations lies in their ability to unite humanity toward a shared vision of harmony and prosperity.

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¹² A. S. E. Fernandes, E. Fernandes, "The Role of International Organizations in Promoting Human Rights Enforcement and Global Peace: A Study on the Middle East," *None*, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.63922/ijevss.v4i01.1646>

¹³ V. Lsenco, "Digital diplomacy for peace: a new frontier in international relations," *Revista Moldoveneasc de Drept Internaional i Relatii Internaionale*, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.61753/1857-1999/2345-1963/2025.20.20-1.03>

¹⁴ Adekeye Adebajo, *The Curse of Berlin: Africa After the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 20-25

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