Assessing the Role of International Organizations in Restraining States from War and Promoting Global Peace and Security

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Abstract

Although International Organizations (IOs) undeniably play a vital role in fostering dialogue and establishing a more peaceful global community, they are frequently perceived as extensions of their dominant member states, promoting decisions that may lack impartiality and inclusivity. Such criticisms are underscored by events such as the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, where the UN's resolutions often reflect political complexities rather than tangible progress towards peace. Similarly, NATO's role in addressing the crises in Syria and Yemen has been criticized for aligning with the strategic priorities of dominant member states rather than achieving comprehensive conflict resolution.The neutrality and efficacy of IOs have come under scrutiny, particularly concerning the United Nations (UN), which is frequently criticized for its slow response times and susceptibility to the political agendas of influential member states. Moreover, while NATO's involvement in the India-Pakistan conflict has demonstrated its geopolitical complexities, the EU's inability to mediate and address prolonged crises in its immediate neighborhood further underscores its limitations. Thus,IOs are often accused of serving as tools for powerful nations to further their strategic objectives, exert influence, and maintain control over weaker states. This study explores the nuanced dynamics of their operations and influence by critically examining the roles of three IOs as a reference: the UN, NATO, and the European Union (EU) andhighlights the dual nature of IOs as both essential entities in the pursuit of international stability

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and security and as organizations constrained by structural and political limitations.

Key Words: International Organizations, Global peace and security, transnational policy, Principal-agent theory, global conflict.

Introduction

International Organizations (IOs) are widely regarded as entities responsible for fostering international peace and security across economic, political, and social dimensions, acting in the collective interest of the global community. Rochester (1986) characterizes IOs as "instruments for making and implementing 'transnational policy' or 'international public policy,' rather than merely as a patterned set of international interactions" (p. 812). IOs did not emerge spontaneously; rather, they were deliberately planned, supported, and governed by the states that established them, serving specific objectives and motives (MacKenzie, 2010, pp. 3–15).

The origins of IOs can be traced back to the mid-19th century, and their proliferation has grown significantly since then. Many global challenges exceed the capacity of individual states to resolve, necessitating the creation of numerous IOs (Park, 2018, p. 2). In the aftermath of World War I, the League of Nations was founded to prevent future global conflicts, though it ultimately failed to avert World War II (Snidal and Thompson, 1999). Following World War II, the United Nations was established, marking a new era in the expansion of IOs. Over time, their quantity, scope, and diversity increased exponentially.

International organizations (IOs) have the potential to serve as pivotal actors in preventing armed conflicts; however, their effectiveness is subject to a complex interplay of political, structural, and systemic factors. While IOs may not consistently succeed in averting all instances of warfare, their role in fostering dialogue, mitigating tensions, and establishing pathways for peaceful resolution remains critically significant. As prominent mechanisms for promoting and maintaining global peace, IOs should facilitate cooperation, deliberation, and coordinated action to address disputes and curb violence. Nonetheless, their efforts are often impeded by inherent challenges, including limited enforcement power, internal divisions among member states, and the sovereign prerogatives of individual nations.

This study contends that despite the remarkable growth in the number of IOs involved in global governance over the past century—leading many to view them as central to shaping political, social, and economic policies worldwide—

they have largely fallen short in achieving their core mandate of preventing war and promoting global peace and security.Specifically, the current Israel-Palestine war, civil war in Syria, Yemen, etc.,have raised questions on the roles IOsplayed to prevent war. By examining three IOs as a reference—the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the European Union (EU)—from distinct geopolitical settings, this analysis seeks to critically assess the failures of IOs in preventing states from engaging in warfare; rather, actualizing the agendas of powerful member states.

Objectives of the Study:
- To critically examine the mechanisms through which powerful states exert influence over International Organizations (IOs) to advance their strategic agendas.

- Tocritically assess the failures of IOs in preventing countries from engaging in warfare and explore the roles played by various IOs in significant historical conflicts, with a focus on their impact and effectiveness.

- Tocritically assess the failures of IOs in restrainingcountries from engaging in warfare and to analyze, from a theoretical perspective, the underlying reasons for the inability of IOs to prevent certain catastrophic wars and large-scale conflicts.

Literature Review:
This article seeks to engage with theoretical debates surrounding the role of international organizations (IOs) to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context, develop assumptions, and refine perspectives on dominant International Relations (IR) theories. Initially, traditional IR theories—including Realism, Liberalism, and other schools of thought—are examined, as they provide contrasting assumptions regarding the utility of IOs in preventing conflicts (Haas, 2008). Subsequently, this study introduces and evaluates significant failures of IOs, including the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the European Union (EU), using the Principal-Agent (P-A) theory of international relations to explain how these organizations have, at times, failed to prevent wars and, paradoxically, acted as catalysts for conflict (Park, 2018).

Realist theories emphasize themes such as anarchy, power, stability, self-help, and balance of power (Waltz, 1959), whereas Liberalism is more concerned with domestic politics, interdependence, decision-making, transnationalism, and regimes (Viotti and Kauppi, 2014). IOs, according to Neo-liberals, are

capable of shifting state preferencesand fostering stable global relations and in some large-sample quantitative studies, the threefoundations of the 'Kantian tripod'—democracy, cross-border trade, and internationalorganizations—seem to minimize the possibility of militarized contests (Russett et al., 1998). In contrast, structural realism, as articulated by Waltz, maintains that IOs reflect global political dynamics rather than shaping them (Waltz, 2000). Furthermore, when violations of certain statistical assumptions arediscussed, quantitative support for a correlation between international organizations andpeace appears to be waning, with IOs raising the likelihood of conflict (Oneal and Russett, 1999). If IOs are to claim effectiveness in restraining wars, they must demonstrate significant influence over state actions.

From both classical and neorealist perspectives, states are depicted as striving to maximize their power relative to others, aiming to achieve or maintain a balance of power (Waltz, 1979; Morgenthau and Nations, 1948). Both Neorealists and Neoliberals agree on the anarchic nature of the international system (Park, 2018). Realists argue that since World War II, all states, regardless of their characteristics, have pursued the common goal of maintaining a world order rooted in the logic of power (O'Loughlin, 1989). According to neorealists, balancing power through alliances is the primary mechanism for avoiding conflicts. In multipolar systems, temporary cooperation may occur, whereas in bipolar systems, peace and cooperation depend heavily on interactions between the superpowers (Park, 2018, pp. 22–23). Conversely, Neoliberals suggest that as self-interested actors, states benefit from the establishment of IOs, which allow them to maximize utility (Park, 2018, p. 18). While liberals prioritize harmony over rivalry, realists remain skeptical of such assumptions.

Liberal institutionalists, recognizing the inherent anarchy of international relations, present their perspective as a robust defense of IOs. Nevertheless, research indicates that IOs have limited influence in preventing conflict unless supported by powerful states (Mearsheimer, 1994). Structural realists acknowledge IOs as tools through which influential states enforce laws, bind other states, and collude to maintain the status quo (McGlinchey, 2017). Thus, IOs are often perceived as intermediaries between power and global politics. However, the extent of their effectiveness in preventing wars remains unclear. Empirical evidence appears to favor the realist argument, as many IOs celebrated for fostering global peace have sometimes had the opposite effect (MacKenzie, 2010).

While both realism and liberalism capture certain aspects of the dynamics of IOs, neither provides a complete explanation of their functioning. As an

alternative framework, the Principal-Agent (P-A) theory has emerged, focusing on rational choice and offering valuable insights into the interaction between states and peace-oriented IOs (Park, 2018, p. 57). According to P-A literature, the autonomy of IOs often creates opportunities for agency slack (McGlinchey, 2017). Agency slack can manifest as shirking, where agents fail to commit to their mandate fully, or as slippage, where agents deviate from their principal's objectives to pursue their own interests (Hawkins et al., 2006, p. 8). The P-A model further posits that when IOs involve multiple principals (member states), the risk of agency slack increases significantly (Park, 2018, p. 28).

This essay critically examines the major shortcomings of the UN, NATO, and the EU in conflict management, exploring these failures through theoretical frameworks and drawing insights into the complexities of international governance and peacebuilding.

Methodology:

1. Research Design

A qualitative explanatory research approach was employed, as the primary objective of this study was to examine the role of International Organizations (IOs) in preventing conflicts among states. Utilizing the Principal-Agent theory within the field of International Relations, the study theoretically explores the influence exerted by powerful states on IOs and the mechanisms through which they seek to control these organizations. To illustrate this analysis, the research examines three specific IOs—namely, the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the European Union (EU)—as case studies where, despite significant security threats and the appeals of weaker states, these organizations failed to prevent governments from engaging in warfare, driven mainly by the agendas of dominant states. Consequently, the study adopts a case study methodology within a qualitative research framework, with thematic analysis serving as a key tool for identifying patterns, drawing connections, and categorizing data for deeper analysis.

The study is based on secondary literature to investigate the policy trajectories and approaches employed by IOs in navigating the complexities of contemporary geopolitics. Through an extensive review of contextual factors, it examines how IOs effectively serve the strategic interests of their parent states under the guise of promoting global peace and security. The research deliberately avoided detailed exposition of broader IR theories, focusing instead on their relevance to the case studies, and refrained from incorporating quantitative data, as the study's core theme did not necessitate numerical analysis.

This research analyzes the process by which IOs abstain from addressing certain intergovernmental challenges and fail to take necessary steps to prevent states from initiating military actions. These dynamics are explored primarily through the lens of two distinct IR theories: realism and liberalism. Lastly, the Principal-Agent theory is instrumental in concluding that state actors, rather than IOs, possess the capacity to play a more decisive role in restraining states from engaging in armed conflict.

2. Data Collection and Analysis:

In this research, secondary data were utilized, sourced from materials selected for their objectivity, reliability, and relevance to the core themes of the analysis. The data sources are categorized as follows:

- **Official Reports:**Reports produced by reputable national and international organizations, such as NATO Parliamentary Assembly, RAND Corporation, International Crisis Group, etc., which are known for their thorough analysis and data-driven insights, were examined. These reports provided critical documentary evidence that helped contextualize the theoretical framework of the study. However, while these reports informed the essay's perceptions, no direct data were extracted from them.

- **Academic Journals and Scholarly Articles:**Peer-reviewed journals and scholarly essays contributed significantly to the conceptual foundation and structural development of the study. These sources offered detailed theoretical insights, empirical research, and case analyses essential for understanding the roles, functions, and impacts of IOs.

- **Analytical Process:**Selected literature and official reports underwent rigorous assessment, with key findings and arguments categorized and thematically examined to identify patterns and connections. Through thematic coding, related theories and arguments were grouped to analyze the significant impacts of IOs on armed conflicts. This culminated in a detailed case study analysis, applying the Principal-Agent model of International Relations to develop a nuanced understanding of IOs' roles in interstate conflicts.

3. Limitations:

Given the study's reliance on secondary data sources, certain inherent limitations were unavoidable:

- **Dependence on Literature and Potential Bias:** The study's analysis

is constrained by the scope and availability of existing literature, which various individuals and groups develop with differing perspectives. Consequently, the discussion may be influenced by biased information or reports, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the study's exploration of IO activities.

- **Temporal Constraints**:Secondary data inherently reflects information from specific timeframes, which may result in the exclusion of recent developments or the latest insights about the research topic.

- **Illustrative Bias:**As secondary data often involves subjective representation, the prioritization of certain aspects over others by the researcher may introduce bias, particularly in the thematic organization and focus of the analysis.

- **Time Constraints and Scope Restrictions**: Limited time for data collection or analysis can affect the depth of this research. Also, studies could only cover a narrow topic or geographic area, which limits the generalizability of the research.

The Role of IOs in Peacebuilding and Restraining States from War:

• **The United Nations (UN)**:

While it may appear straightforward to commend the United Nations (UN) for its role in conflict management, it is prudent to avoid making overarching claims regarding its effectiveness without first engaging in a rigorous empirical investigation. Established with a liberal idealist framework, the primary objectives of the UN were to avert the occurrence of a third world war and to uphold international peace and security (Akashi, 1995). Nevertheless, the extent to which the UN has succeeded in preventing wars and addressing regional conflicts warrants critical examination.

The United Nations (UN) encountered considerable obstacles in fulfilling its mission to sustain global peace and stability throughout the Cold War period, as the competition between superpowers frequently hindered the operations of the Security Council (Franck, 2003). Nevertheless, as the Cold War concluded, the UN assumed a critical role as a mediator in numerous international conflicts (Akashi, 1995). In the 21st century, the efficacy of the UN as an institution capable of preventing interstate warfare remains comparatively understated and ambiguous (Park, 2018). The organization is rarely acknowledged as a primary actor in international mediation, especially in resolving high-profile conflicts.

Nonetheless, its perceived ineffectiveness is consistent with realist perspectives, which diverge from liberal expectations concerning the UN's functionality (Howard, 2017).

An intriguing question arises: How has the United Nations (UN) managed to persist and continue its expansion despite inherent limitations in conflict prevention among states? Principal-Agent (P-A) literature offers insights into this phenomenon, proposing that agents—specifically, international organizations (IOs)—prioritize the sustainability and growth of their institutions through efforts to increase membership, augment budgets, and enhance competencies (McGlinchey, 2017). IOs allocate their resources strategically to ensure their continued existence, with larger organizations generally experiencing more rapid growth. Furthermore, the existence of such organizations influences the political landscape, fostering conditions in which even seemingly minor events may serve as opportunities for institutional development. Consequently, maintaining an international organization is often less challenging than founding one, and dismantling such bodies is frequently even more difficult—a fact exemplified by the enduring presence of the UN (Vaubel, 2006).

The UN Security Council(UNSC)plays a crucial role in discussions withinthe UN. UNSC only uses collective military action as its last resort to prevent war (Murthy, 2018). It has 15 member states, five of which are permanent and have veto power. It first assesses the situation, dispatches envoys, conducts an investigation into the assertion, and issues cease-fire orders or dispatches peacekeeping forces to help defuse tensions(Malone, 2007). If the dispute worsens, the SCmay resort to economic sanctions or blockades to halt it. Military intervention is the last resort because the UN's entire purpose is to resolve international disputes through diplomacy; war is the absolute last resort (Park, 2018; pp. 38-45).

The credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations (UN) as a peacemaker and mediator have been deeply intertwined with the dynamics of great-power relations. Tensions between the United States and Russia were notably exacerbated by the unilateral diplomatic and military intervention of the United States in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, followed by the Kosovo crisis, further straining their relationship (Howard, 2017). In the post-9/11 era, the Bush administration's inclination toward unilateralist policies, culminating in the Iraq War of 2003, intensified the polarization among great powers and weakened both international policymaking and multilateralism under the pretext of combating terrorism (Malone, 2007). These developments lend

credence to the central tenet of realist theory, which posits that the interplay of conflict and cooperation among great powers significantly influences the functioning of international organizations (Crockett, 2012).

The concept of agency slack, as highlighted within the Principal-Agent (PA) framework, underscores the challenges arising from the diverse preferences of member states responsible for governing international organizations (IOs). When heterogeneity in preferences among member states is pronounced, achieving consensus on the timing and manner of exercising control becomes increasingly complex (Martins, 2006). A notable instance exemplifying this agency slack is the Iraq War. In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States, supported by the United Kingdom, asserted that Iraq harbored Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) posing an imminent threat to regional and global security. Consequently, the United States sought intervention in Iraq. However, the United Nations did not authorize the intervention, as no conclusive evidence substantiated the claims regarding Iraq's possession of WMDs (Franck, 2003).

Disagreements among key members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) concerning the scope of UN weapons inspections in Iraq significantly constrained the Council's authority over the inspection process (Williams, 2012). By this point, all members of the UNSC, except for the United Kingdom, had indicated their intention to veto any resolution that might lead to military intervention in Iraq (Malone, 2007). Consequently, the absence of unanimous support within the bloc of permanent members rendered the UN ineffective in taking further action regarding Iraq (Malone, 2007). As all UN member states maintain sovereignty, the United States and the United Kingdom proceeded to invade Iraq without UN authorization, citing the alleged presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) as the principal justification for their intervention.

The politicization of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) constitutes a significant obstacle to the UN's effectiveness in peace-building missions (Park, 2018). According to the Principal-Agent (P-A) model, member states possess varying degrees of power and often act in ways that align with their interests and principles, sometimes undermining collective goals. These divergent preferences may afford the agent—namely, the international organization (IO)—the ability to disregard external criticism (Park, 2018). A stark example of such dynamics was evident in the case of Rwanda. Following the 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was established. While this agreement between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was comprehensive in several respects, it notably excluded provisions for UN

involvement in addressing critical issues such as human rights and electoral processes (Park, 2018). Beyond France, no major power demonstrated significant concern over the unfolding crisis in Rwanda. Consequently, UNAMIR, along with the broader international community, remained passive as approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were massacred. France, the sole influential actor prepared to intervene, was ultimately unable to halt the genocide.

According to Park (2008), an increase in the number of principals correlates with a higher likelihood of slippage in Principal-Agent (P-A) dynamics. However, alignment between the preferences of the principal and the agent significantly enhances the chances of success, as it fosters the agent's loyalty to the principals and facilitates the effective utilization of available control mechanisms. In contrast, fragmentation among principals undermines the efficacy of these mechanisms. A pertinent example lies in the international response to the conflict in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. The United States interpreted the situation primarily as an instance of ethnic hatred, deeming intervention to be futile. In France, the crisis was perceived as a confrontation between elites and the general population, while China categorized it as an internal issue. Only a few European nations, such as Germany, along with the Non-Aligned Movement, advocated for military intervention, attributing the conflict to external aggression by the Serbs (Howard and Stark, 2017, pp. 127–171).

The Middle East remains one of the most contentious challenges confronted by the United Nations (UN). A significant number of UN resolutions have expressed criticism toward Israel, and John Mearsheimer (2009) condemned Israel's approach toward Hamas, asserting that it sought to establish an "open-air prison" for Palestinians in Gaza and inflict severe suffering as a means of coercion. Although there were calls for the UN to intervene or respond, its efforts to monitor or stabilize the crisis were hindered by the divergent preferences of major powers. This impediment led to widespread criticism of the UN's capacity to prevent states from engaging in warfare. Furthermore, the UN's attempts to foster peace in the region are widely regarded as unsuccessful, exacerbated by concerns over Israel's advanced nuclear capabilities, Iran's expanding nuclear ambitions, and the nuclear programs of other regional powers such as India and Pakistan (Fawcett, 2012).

Since the Arab Spring, the United Nations (UN) has faced significant challenges that have undermined its reputation as a transformative force for democratization. Its response to developments in Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria revealed notable shortcomings(Howard and Stark, 2017). Following the

2013 coup against President Morsi, the UN largely assumed a passive role in Egypt. In Libya, UN intervention inadvertently exacerbated civilian vulnerabilities and hindered efforts for peaceful reform. Diplomatic impasses within the Security Council further complicated the situation in Syria, as military and political developments occurred outside the country and involved major global powers. Meanwhile, Yemen has descended into a humanitarian catastrophe, fueled by regional geopolitical interests exploiting internal tribal divisions. This situation has effectively eroded expectations of the UN's ability to contribute positively to the establishment of democratic governance and constitutional reform in the region (Murthy, 2018).

The Syrian civil war illustrates a grave crisis driven by realist concerns over power and security, with central and regional powers supporting opposing factions. The conflict has resulted in the tragic loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. Amid this turmoil, Russia and China have consistently resisted allowing the United Nations (UN) to intervene (Park, 2018, pp. 45–46). The persistent instability and chaos in the Middle East highlight profound shortcomings in the institutional framework of the UN. This failure is evident in its inability to broker peace agreements between conflicting states or effectively prevent wars, underscoring the limits of its influence in addressing deep-rooted political instability within the region.

Analyzing the United Nations' effectiveness through the framework of the Principal-Agent (P-A) model underscores critical limitations in its capacity as a mediator in conflict resolution. The UN's ability to successfully prevent wars is contingent upon the alignment of great powers' strategic and security interests (Howard and Stark, 2017). When these interests clash, the prospects for diplomacy diminish, reducing the UN's leverage to mediate effectively. Conversely, the presence of a viable pathway for negotiated and diplomatic settlements significantly enhances the organization's potential to fulfill its intended role in conflict management and peace-building. This perspective highlights the intricate dynamics between member states and the UN, illustrating how geopolitical considerations can either facilitate or hinder its operational success.

- **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):**
The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as a military collective defense organization, was established in 1949 with a clear policy aimed at preserving peace in Europe (Cook, 2017). Its primary objectives included preventing Soviet influence from extending into Europe, maintaining control over Germany's role in European affairs, and ensuring sustained United States

engagement in European power dynamics (Park, 2018). It can be argued that NATO's formation by the United States was strategically designed to uphold a balance of power in Europe. This strategy proved effective for decades, as the United States solidified a substantial military presence in Europe while the Soviet Union remained isolated, eventually culminating in its disintegration (Cook, 2017).

Nevertheless, NATO faces significant systemic challenges. Among these is the absence of a voting mechanism, which has hindered its capacity to address member states' security concerns effectively in the post-Cold War era (Kennedy, 2016). Despite the end of the Cold War, the United States' foreign policy continues to frame Russia as a persistent threat, offering support to former Soviet states in opposition to Russian objectives under President Putin's leadership (Taylor, 2019). Moreover, while NATO has potential pathways for reform, it lacks mechanisms to sanction negligent allies or prevent the rise of authoritarian regimes within member states (Cook, 2020).

Within the framework of the Principal-Agent (P-A) model, the emphasis lies on the principal's ability to control the agent. The principal possesses the authority to establish the agent and incentivize it to pursue the principal's interests (Park, 2018). In the case of NATO, the organization can be interpreted as an agent created to advance the strategic interests of the United States.

NATO played a pivotal role in securing the United States' triumph during the Cold War. Reflecting on NATO's inception, it becomes evident that its foundational objective—and an as-yet unfinished mission—was to foster conditions wherein Europe could assume an equitable share of the responsibility for its security. While NATO is widely regarded as effective in its ability to respond swiftly to crises (Taylor,2019), it has also faced significant criticism for allegedly exacerbating conflicts and wars rather than preventing them. The Kosovo crisis, in particular, posed a serious challenge to NATO's legitimacy, not in terms of the defense of its member states, but concerning its evolving mission of promoting ideals and ensuring regional stability.

Alliance members expressed apprehension about the potential for the Kosovo conflict to escalate into neighboring regions, particularly Albania and Macedonia, thereby triggering a broader regional crisis (Erameh and Idachaba, 2017). In response, the United States transitioned its bilateral warnings to the Serbs into NATO's multilateral framework. However, the Kosovo intervention remains one of the most contentious humanitarian interventions in modern history. The underlying premises of the operation provoked extensive debate, not only in the political realm but also within military circles, leading to

significant discourse on its strategic and ethical implications.

The Principal-Agent (P-A) model highlights the complexities that arise when an agent operates under the direction of multiple principals, often leading to struggles for control among these principals (Vaubel, 2006). This dynamic was evident in NATO's intervention in Libya. Although the political shortcomings of Gaddafi's regime were well-recognized, NATO's actions in Libya proceeded with little regard for procedural considerations, leading to widespread criticism (Cook, 2020). The Libyan conflict further revealed NATO's limitations, especially when its member states found themselves—or were perceived to be— on opposing sides. This tension was notably pronounced when France, a significant nuclear power, criticized NATO's lack of American leadership, referring to the alliance as suffering from "brain death" (Cook, 2020). The Libyan crisis not only intensified global instability but also obstructed international consensus-building, weakened regional institutions, and deepened mistrust among major world powers (Erameh and Idachaba, 2017).

The United States is arguably the most influential stakeholder within NATO, holding a disproportionate role in the alliance's decision-making and operations (Axelrod and Borzutzky, 2006). Within the framework of the Principal-Agent (P-A) model, this dominance underscores the significance of a leading state in ensuring the agent's alignment with the principal's interests. When the United States demonstrates strong motivation toward an initiative, its position within NATO enables it to shape NATO conditionality in ways that align with its strategic objectives.

The P-A model also posits that principals and agents often have conflicting preferences. Principals may seek to delegate responsibilities to agents, while agents, in turn, might attempt to avoid these responsibilities. An illustrative case of such tension occurred during the U.S.-led War on Terror, when the United States strongly advocated for NATO's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, NATO refrained from participating, as several member states, particularly European nations, did not equate the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq with the broader War on Terror. Nonetheless, member states demonstrated some level of support by endorsing a Polish-led peacekeeping mission in Iraq and later agreeing to limited training initiatives for Iraqi security forces (Kay, 2005).

An analysis of NATO's recent activities suggests that the organization has functioned as a vehicle for the United States to extend its influence in Europe. Through NATO, the United States maintained dominance over military interventions while leveraging international forces to distribute the financial

and operational burdens of such actions. Furthermore, in situations lacking a United Nations (UN) mandate, NATO's institutional authority served to mitigate perceptions of arbitrariness in U.S. decision-making (Park, 2018). However, NATO's role in restoring peace and preventing conflicts has been limited. On some occasions, it has even been criticized for exacerbating tensions and acting as a catalyst for conflict rather than a restraining force.

- **The European Union (EU):**

The European Union (EU), as a regional organization, was established upon the principles of liberal institutionalism, with its overarching aim being the promotion of stability and security across Europe (Hodson, 2010). Rooted in the Schuman Declaration of 1950, the EU was founded with the primary objective of bridging the divisions across the continent and preventing future conflicts. These foundational principles remain integral to contemporary European policy, influencing both internal and external strategies. Internally, the EU emphasizes fostering stronger relations among its member states, while externally, its policies focus on enlargement and strengthening ties within Europe's neighbouring regions (Lee, 2016).

In 2012, the European Union (EU) received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its contribution to peace and stability across Europe. However, this decision was met with criticism and even ridicule, particularly as it coincided with a period marked by economic recession, monetary instability, and social unrest (Androsch, 2016). Despite such criticisms, the EU remains an undeniably influential global entity. It holds the distinction of being the world's largest economy, leading trading bloc, and foremost donor of humanitarian and development aid (Hodson, 2010).

When evaluating the European Union's (EU) impact on preventing wars and managing conflicts, empirical evidence aligns with realist perspectives (Crockett, 2012). Despite its status as a prominent global actor in the realm of peace and security, the EU struggles to exert substantial influence due to the lack of accountability among its member states. This limitation is exemplified in the EU's inability to present a unified stance on international crises, reach consensus on coordinated actions in conflict zones, and advance coherent European strategic objectives, particularly in its immediate neighborhood (Raik, 2006).

Critics have identified issues within the EU that undermine its efficacy, including threats to transparency, freedom of expression, fairness, and accountability—flaws rooted in the liberal framework the organization purports to uphold (Park, 2018). These criticisms resonate with principal-agent theory,

which highlights such structural weaknesses. While the EU has successfully maintained peace among its member states, its neighbouring regions remain engulfed in civil wars and crises, posing significant risks to the stability of the continent and challenging the foundational principles of the organization.

To address challenges in its immediate vicinity, the European Union (EU) established the European Neighbourhood Policy, aimed at promoting stability, security, and prosperity in its eastern and southern neighboring regions (Lehne, 2014). However, the southern neighborhood has remained deeply affected by the repercussions of the Arab Spring, which triggered protests, revolutions, and civil wars, leaving the region rife with persistent turmoil. The emergence of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria further exacerbated the situation, introducing an added layer of complexity to the crises in Europe's southern neighborhood. Despite its ambitious scope, the Neighbourhood Policy proved ineffective in curbing these conflicts (Tommel, 2013).

Structural challenges, such as preference divergence, asymmetric information, and specialized expertise, re-emerged within the European Union's operational framework, thereby compromising its capacity to effectively address crises. The Principal-Agent (P-A) model accentuates this dysfunction, indicating that organizations frequently become ineffective when principals have divergent preferences (Lee, 2016). As a result, the European Union's endeavors in managing and resolving crises within its southern neighborhood have been largely unsuccessful, continuing to pose significant threats to regional stability.

The situation in Europe's eastern neighborhood has profoundly and immediately affected the continent's security and stability (Androsch, 2016). Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, involving pro-Russian separatists, escalated into a civil war in 2014, exposing the EU's limited ability to respond effectively. Nonetheless, the Ukraine crisis is neither the first-time instability has affected Europe's eastern neighborhood nor the first challenge to EU-Russia relations. The region is characterized by several "frozen conflicts" that, although not currently active, remain unresolved and pose considerable risks of escalating into open violence, which could further destabilize the area and worsen EU-Russia tensions (Solana, 2004).

Several of these frozen conflicts are concentrated in the South Caucasus. For instance, South Ossetia and Abkhazia emerged as a result of Georgia's war with Russia in 2008, leading to subsequent EU mediation efforts. Additionally, Nagorno-Karabakh remains a focal point of tension, stemming from the Armenian-Azerbaijani war and the 1994 ceasefire agreement (Kennedy, 2016).

These enduring conflicts underscore the challenges in achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

Frozen conflicts pose a substantial challenge to the European Union (EU), emphasizing its inability to achieve permanent resolutions to disputes and maintaining an enduring risk to peace and stability throughout the continent. Although these conflicts may remain inactive for prolonged periods without progressing to open violence, they possess the perilous capacity to ignite suddenly and escalate into violent clashes. Furthermore, the destabilizing repercussions of frozen conflicts go beyond violence; they can serve as catalysts for terrorism, state collapse, and civil wars, thereby exacerbating regional and global security concerns (Solana, 2004).

Although the European Union has established a Policy Framework aimed at preventing warfare and promoting peace, empirical research persistently highlights significant deficiencies within its primary initiatives, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. These policies frequently lack the requisite tools and political support essential for effectively managing ongoing crises and averting the onset of civil conflicts (Lehne, 2014). Such shortcomings emphasize the imperative for enhanced cohesion and the development of innovative strategies within the European Union's conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.

The European Union's (EU) capacity to serve as a significant entity in promoting peace and security is contingent upon three pivotal factors: its ability to implement missions, the allocation of resources dedicated to security, and its recognition as a global leader in these domains (Lehne, 2014). Nevertheless, recent crises have accentuated the EU's shortcomings in effectively cultivating peace. Such trends are not novel and are consistent with observations and recommendations delineated in various EU policy documents, including the European Security Strategy of 2003, its 2008 revision, and the 2014 Joint Communication on Neighbourhood Policy (Kennedy, 2016).

Regrettably, both the EU and its member states have consistently failed to adhere to the commitments outlined in these documents. The majority of the recommendations intended to improve the EU's operational and strategic effectiveness have not been executed, underscoring a persistent disparity between policy formulation and concrete implementation. This disconnect diminishes the EU's ambition to serve as a decisive actor in international peace and security.

Failures of IOs in Conflict Prevention: Case Studies of Ukraine, Palestine, and Iran:

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have long been central to global peacekeeping and conflict resolution. However, their effectiveness in preventing war in Ukraine, Palestine, and Iran has been constrained by structural, political, and strategic limitations.

The **UN** has consistently condemned violations of international law, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which it declared a breach of the UN Charter (UNRIC, 2022). Humanitarian agencies like UNHCR and WFP have provided aid to millions, yet the Security Council's paralysis—due to Russia's veto power—has stymied enforcement mechanisms (Better World Campaign, 2022). In Palestine, the UN has supported a two-state solution and operated relief programs through UNRWA, but repeated vetoes, particularly by the United States, have blocked resolutions aimed at curbing Israeli settlement expansion and military actions (Al Jazeera, 2023). In Iran, the UN's role has focused on nuclear non-proliferation via the IAEA and the JCPOA. However, the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 and recent military escalations have undermined the UN's diplomatic leverage (UNSDG, 2025).

The **EU** has taken a more assertive stance in Ukraine, imposing 17 rounds of sanctions on Russia, supporting Ukraine's EU candidacy, and providing military and humanitarian aid (Consilium, 2025). Despite this, the EU failed to deter the initial invasion, revealing shortcomings in strategic foresight and preventive diplomacy. In Palestine, the EU has condemned Hamas attacks and Israeli aggression, advocated for a two-state solution, and sanctioned extremist settlers (EEAS, 2024). Yet, internal divisions and limited influence over Israeli policy have weakened its impact. Regarding Iran, the EU played a key role in brokering the JCPOA and has supported post-conflict recovery efforts. However, its marginalization in recent U.S.-Iran negotiations and inability to prevent the collapse of the nuclear deal highlight its limited geopolitical clout (ECFR, 2025).

NATO has provided extensive military support to Ukraine, including weapons, training, and intelligence, framing the conflict as a threat to Euro-Atlantic security (NATO, 2025). Nevertheless, its deterrence failed to prevent Russia's invasion, and its decision not to intervene directly reflects a cautious posture to avoid escalation. In Palestine, NATO has had no formal role, though scholars have proposed peacekeeping functions in hypothetical post-conflict scenarios (NATO Watch, 2023). In Iran, NATO's role has been peripheral but increasingly relevant. Following U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, NATO allies have discussed strategic implications, though Article 5 has not been invoked (Global

News, 2025).

In fine, it can be said that, while the UN, EU, and NATO have demonstrated normative commitment and operational engagement, their ability to prevent war has been constrained by institutional design, geopolitical rivalries, and strategic caution. These cases underscore the need for reform, enhanced coordination, and more robust preventive diplomacy.

Recommendations:

In light of the complexities discussed regarding the roles of International Organizations (IOs) in promoting global peace and security, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance their effectiveness in restraining states from engaging in war:

Enhancing Diplomatic Efforts and Conflict Prevention Mechanisms:

International Organizations, notably the UN and regional entities such as the African Union (AU), ought to prioritize mediation and peace negotiations as fundamental instruments for resolving conflicts. These organizations can enhance their diplomatic influence by facilitating direct dialogue between conflicting parties (for example, the UN's initiatives in Yemen) and by increasing the frequency of peace negotiations prior to the escalation of tensions into comprehensive warfare.

Early warning systems should be implemented to enable international organizations (IOs) to monitor political and social unrest and to take pre-emptive action. The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) ought to strengthen its preventive diplomacy initiatives through earlier interventions aimed at preventing violent outbreaks (Akashi, 1995).

Strengthening Economic and Political Incentives for Peace:

Sanctions, when effectively implemented, possess the potential to serve as a deterrent against hostile actions. The United Nations Security Council, in conjunction with the World Bank, may impose sanctions on offending states while providing conditional assistance to encourage peaceful resolutions. This strategy would resemble the post-conflict reconstruction funds that are designed to incentivize peace and stability (Haas, 2008).

Furthermore, trade agreements under organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional alliances (e.g., EU, ASEAN) should be utilized to promote economic interdependence. Such interdependence has been demonstrated to diminish the probability of military conflict by elevating the

costs associated with war (Russett et al., 1998).

Advancing Peacekeeping and Military Deterrence Capabilities:

IOs should persist in deploying peacekeeping missions, exemplified by situations in Palestine, Cyprus, and South Sudan, where impartial forces can assist in enforcing ceasefire agreements and safeguarding civilians. Such initiatives should be complemented by the endeavours of NATO and other regional defence organizations to provide military deterrence when deemed necessary. The significance of military deterrence cannot be overstated, as it plays a vital role in preventing the escalation of conflicts, as evidenced by various interventions conducted by NATO (Howard, 2017).

Fostering Legal Accountability and Arms Control:

International law must be central to preventing and resolving conflicts, including wars. The International Criminal Court (ICC) should be granted greater authority to actively prosecute war criminals, serving as a deterrent for future atrocities. At the same time, arms control agreements—managed by the UNSC and IAEA—must be enforced more rigorously to limit nuclear proliferation and inhibit the arms trade. These steps are vital to ensure that IOs do more than merely mediate peace; they should also help establish long-term stability by restricting the means of warfare (Park, 2018).

Addressing Structural Challenges and Agency Slack:

The issue of veto power in the United Nations Security Council, frequently exploited by major powers such as the United States and Russia, remains a considerable challenge. Initiatives to ameliorate the effects of this disparity—such as augmenting the representation of smaller nations—could enable international organizations to undertake more decisive actions without being hindered by political rivalries. Additionally, bilateral and multilateral dialogues should be promoted to address sovereignty concerns, especially in instances where states oppose international organizational intervention (McGlinchey, 2017).

By implementing these recommendations, IOs can more effectively achieve their peacebuilding and conflict prevention goals, thereby taking a more proactive approach in minimizing the risk of war.

Conclusion:

This essay presents a compelling analysis of the debate surrounding the efficacy

of international institutions in preventing war and promoting global prosperity. By evaluating the roles of the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the European Union (EU), the essay aligns with neo-realist perspectives, arguing that international organizations are inherently limited in their ability to alter the anarchic nature of the international system. The evidence supports the notion that these organizations often serve as tools for powerful states, with global peace and stability ultimately dependent on the political will and decisions of those dominant actors.

Furthermore, the assertion that international organizations are neither essential nor sufficient for preventing war is backed by historical and theoretical insights, such as Waltz's (2000) argument that peaceful anarchic state systems are conceivable. The recognition of Snidal and Abbott's "decentralized cooperation theory" adds depth to this conclusion, emphasizing that international cooperation can occur without the need for formal organizations, even at a macro-political level (Gilligan, 2009).

Therefore, the key message of this study is that international organizations cannot restrain states from war; rather, it is the dominant member states that drive IOs, as per their motive,and cause war to satisfy their agenda. The ongoing Israel-Palestine war is the most significant example of this, where US-Israel aggression is about to destroy a nation, while international organizations like the UN are acting as a puppet of the US.

While the essay acknowledges the historical failures of international organizations to lead the world toward peace, it retains an optimistic outlook by suggesting the potential for these entities to one day fulfill their vision of a more peaceful and prosperous world. This perspective encapsulates both a critique of past inefficiencies and a hope for future possibilities, making it a balanced and thought-provoking conclusion.

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