

No Role for UN

How to reform the 60-year-old United Nations has been a debating issue for quite some time. And concern for UN reform often stops short of enforcing 'pious' resolutions. After the recent flare up in the Middle East and UN's strategy of inaction in the conflict one cannot be sure what UN's collapse might mean for the rest of the world. Anyway it is collapsing, reform or no reform. That America and its allies want to reform it to death is becoming crystal clear with every passing day. UN secretary general Kofi Annan cuts a sorry figure as power players have no patience to pay heed to his appeal for peace. Only the other day Israel's foreign minister Tzipi Livni declined Annan's call for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon but looked forward to parleying with US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to measure the disturbed strategic balance in the region. American unilateralism coupled with Israeli arrogance seems to have made UN irrelevant in almost all theatres of war and tension. America can foil any number of attempts to reform UN if it goes against its hegemonic interests.

The history of UN in conflict resolution is really dismal. The hard reality is that UN passes resolutions not for implementation. Speedy implementation of UN resolutions 242, 338 and others on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories would indeed end the circle of violence in the Middle East and pave the way for the end of all those outdated mandates.

UNRWA, the UN agency dealing with Palestinian refugees for the last six decades, would have no function if the refugees, now scattered all over the Arab world, were allowed to go home or get compensation. But Israel is not in favour of closing down UNRWA. They want Palestinians to remain rootless for ever and live in perpetual uncertainty. What is more they are pressing UNRWA to expand its scope and provide services for non-refugee Palestinians. In other words Israel needs permanent Palestinian refugees to justify its aggressive existence.

In support of non-implementation of UN resolutions 242 and 338 regarding the Palestinian question, Israel quite often raises the issue of non-implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1539 seeking Lebanon government's complete sovereignty over the entire country and disarming of Hizbullah. The fact is that Lebanon lives in a situation of dual power. While the central government is in no position to exert its control over south Lebanon, Hizbullah virtually maintains a parallel army there to run its unofficial writ. The days are not far when Lebanon may be partitioned into two separate entities. In that event Israel will have to deal diplomatically with Hizbullah even in the coming days.

There are UN decisions that Washington does not want implemented, and there are UN non-decisions that it does. The permanent members of UN Security Council do not want to risk American displeasure and in the process undermine the very foundation of UN. After the demise of the mighty Soviet Union, America treats Russia as a defeated nation. And Russian veto differs from American veto. There lies the implied truth that a Russian veto is not as equal as American veto. As for the Chinese the less said the better

because they have all along been playing passive role in UN affairs. As for veto capabilities of Britain, France, Russia and China it is now largely based on historical rather than present capabilities. This is one reason UN today looks more like an extension of US state department.

Israel apart, even Morocco can disregard UN resolution, with US backing of course. The issue of 'Other Separation Wall' in western Sahara has been studiously bypassed by both America and France as well as other countries on the Security Council. Morocco has publicly refused to allow the act of self-determination for the people of western Sahara that the International Court of Justice mandated over three decades ago. The king is not going to abide by UN decisions.

These days Washington interferes far too often and far too successfully in the running of UN show. Without the exclusion of the influence of individual member states other than when expressed in collective decisions by bodies like General Assembly to talk about UN reform makes no sense. ✍✍✍✍