

# **BETWEEN HOPE OF COLLABORATION AND THE PROTECTION OF PEACE: THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MECHANISM AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL DURING THE DÉTENTE PERIOD (1973-1974)**

Gabriel ZVÎNCĂ\*

## **Abstract:**

In times of crises the world tends to look to the people who might have an influence over the situation and who could solve the issue which is affecting the lives of thousands or millions of people. After the creation of the United Nations, the Secretary-General, the administrative head of the organization, is usually believed to be the one who could influence the terms of wars in one way or another as the UN was created to prevent the atrocities of the First and Second World War.

In terms of the UN Charter, the main responsible for keeping the international peace and security is the Security Council, but the Secretary-General had and has an important contribution towards the ending of wars and conflicts. His 'good offices' and influence over the actions of states, as well as the vision over the peacekeeping mechanism was of great importance during and after the Cold War. If Dag Hammarskjöld is the one considered to have placed the basis for the peacekeeping mechanism, Kurt Waldheim is the one who continued his work and developed it during the Détente period.

The present article intends to analyze if the Secretary-General does have a say in solving international crises or not by analyzing a case study of the implication Kurt Waldheim in the 1973-1974 crises of Middle East.

**Keywords:** United Nations, Secretary-General, Security Council, Peacekeeping, Middle East, Yom Kippur.

## **Introduction.**

The United Nations was created to 'protect future generations from the scourge of war', but critics would say that it failed to do so, taking into consideration the numerous inter and intra wars that took place in the 78 years since its creation in 1945. The beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022 and of the Israel – Hamas war in 2023 questioned the importance of the United Nations, taking into consideration the atrocities that are committed by the Russian Army on the Ukrainian civilians or that of the Israelian Army in Gaza. In this context, the main responsible for the UN, the Secretary-General, is also critiqued for his lack of actions in regards

for the situation in Ukraine<sup>1</sup>. However, we should ask the question – is there any possibility for the Secretary-General to have an influence over the protection of international peace and security, even more when this is a prerogative attributed to the Security Council only?

The present paper's purpose is to analyze the importance of the Secretary General in international crises and to assess his influence over the peacekeeping mechanism and its importance during the Détente period. The main focus of the paper will be placed on the Secretary General, who is the main administrator of the United Nations, and his role in the de-escalation of the conflicts, in the shaping of the peacekeeping operations and the general contribution towards peace. It will do so by analyzing a case study for the two operations authorized by the United Nations in the Middle East in 1973-1974, Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) and United Nations Disengagement Force (UNDOF). The missions were chosen because it represented a new phase of the peacekeeping operations authorized during the Cold War, after the lack of authorization between 1967 – 1973. The case is interesting because it represented a revitalization of the peacekeeping mechanism, a scenario that would be possible to happen in the Russia's war in Ukraine or in Gaza.

The research methodology that will be used throughout the paper will be limited to the diachronic exposure, which will present the interventions that have been authorized, taking into account the context and the mandates. This approach will aim to achieve a research goal, which is to underline the importance of the peacekeeping principles for the missions authorized. The functional and institutional analysis will identify how the organization, through the Secretary-General authorized, mandated, and coordinated the missions. Interdisciplinarity will also be used to carry out the research. Thus, theories of analysis specific to international relations, such as institutional neoliberalism and constructivism, will be considered. In the case of the first theory, it will be possible to analyze how the UN has managed to position itself between the two superpowers and propose a direction of action. Through the constructive analysis, it will be seen how the UN Secretary General has formulated rules and procedures of action in the direction of solving the conflict, how it negotiated with the superpowers for the peacekeeping

---

\* Ph.D. Candidate, Doctoral School 'History. Civilization. Culture', [gabriel.zvinca7@gmail.com](mailto:gabriel.zvinca7@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/29/un-deputy-responds-to-criticism-over-ukraine-conflict-amina-mohammed.html> and <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2596438>

operation to be authorized and how his declarations have influenced the actions of the actors.

The sources to which the research will appeal are made up of two categories. The first category, that of primary sources, includes official UN documents, transcripts, and summaries of discussions in the decision-making forum of the organization, available online. These will be used to illustrate the functioning of the UN institutional mechanism, to know the positions of international actors and how the Secretary-General influenced the discussion. In addition to those sources, the memoirs of the main actors involved in UN interventions will be used, such as the memories of Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim or of Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State during the crises. The studies of the other researchers will be the second category of sources, which will be used to know the state of the subject's research.

Regarding the structure of the presentation, the paper will present the context of the Détente and the superpower relationship, followed by a presentation of the UN involvement in the Middle East. Afterwards, the focus will shift on the Yom Kippur War of 1973 with its regional implications, on the behaviour of involved states and the initial position adopted by the superpowers and how the conflict evolved. Following this, it will be presented and analyzed the importance of the Secretary General in the conflict, how he influenced the situation for the achieving of peace, how he negotiated with the superpowers the form of peacekeeping operations and how his perspective was implemented in the mechanism. At the end of the article, the main conclusions drawn, and future prospects of analysis will be presented.

### **The Détente period, the superpowers' relationship, and the Middle East crises.**

During the Détente Period of the Cold War – briefly identified with the middle 1960s and the end of 1970s – the two superpowers, the United States, and the Soviet Union, diminished their influence over the international system and provided the opportunity for the United Nations mechanism, which has been crippled since 1947-1948, to make use of its prerogatives and try and secure international peace and security. In this context, it was argued that the United Nations has tried to have an influence over the international system in its seeking of peace and security, benefiting from the common shared view that the superpowers

should mutually solve their issues rather than exploit them in each's interest and, thus, appealed to the help of the United Nations<sup>2</sup>.

The international context of this period has witnessed both progresses towards peace, such as the signing of SALT I, in 1969, and regresses in the direction of war, the most notably example being the 6 Days War of 1967, when the United Nations could not prevent the conflict. The 1970s proved an opportunity for the United Nations and its peacekeeping mechanism to prove its importance on the international stage in the context of the Middle East agenda. To which extent did the United Nations managed to do so and did the superpowers really offered some room for the UN mechanism to work is to be analyzed.

The superpowers' relationship during the Cold War period can be divided into several phases, depending on the international context, their military and nuclear capabilities, as well as the politics promoted at the global level. In this regard, we have the First Cold War (1947-1962) which includes other distinct periods, such as the origins, intensification, and escalation of the conflict. The last one is characterized by the so-called Mutual Assured Destruction theory, with notorious events, such as the creation of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the construction of the wall of Berlin or, the most obvious one, the Cuban missile crisis. The next period would be the Détente one (from 1963 to 1979), on which the present paper is focused on, followed by the Second Cold War and the End of the Cold War.

The era of détente that occurred between the two main Cold War periods had a variety of causes. It was partly an admission by the two blocs, especially in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, that if competition got out of hand, they would face 'mutually assured annihilation.' However, from the 1960s onwards, there was a rising realization among superpowers of the reciprocal benefits of embracing at least some level of economic and technical interdependence. As a result of these developments, the US and the Soviet Union agreed that international problems should be addressed cooperatively whenever feasible rather than exploited by each party for its own goals<sup>3</sup>. This approach was, of course, very much in line with the peacekeeping project's initial logic. According to it, peacekeeping purpose was to limit these 'brushfires' to the periphery, as they should not be extended in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Norrie MacQueen, *The United Nations, Peace Operations and the Cold War*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 73.

<sup>3</sup> MacQueen, *The United Nations*, 73.

superpower global conflict<sup>4</sup>. In the context of détente, the superpowers' conceptions of their own interests and the idea of peacekeeping became much more closely aligned, and, thus, proved to be a great opportunity for the United Nations to exploit its peacekeeping mechanism in the context of Middle East crises.

The bellicose situation in the Middle East between Israel and the Arab states surrounding the newly created state was a special characteristic of the Cold War, the conflicts between the two sides started in 1946 and continued with levels of high and low intensity until the Peace Accords of Camp David, and even continued after that date, with the intervention of Israeli in Lebanon against the Organization Free Palestine.

### **The United Nations involvement in the Middle East**

In what comes to the Middle East crises and the involvement of the United Nations, the region proved to be the place where the peacekeeping mechanism was tested, implemented, and developed. Here, during the Cold War, no more than six<sup>5</sup>, from the 15 operations which were deployed by the organization in this period, were authorized.

During the first interventions in the crises, which took place in the classic Cold War, the UN had to take into consideration the political interests of the two superpowers and carefully juggle with their positions in the Security Council and the General Assembly to authorize peacekeeping operation and maintain international peace and security.

Regarding the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, the international organization was entitled to deal with the supervision of the armistice treaty signed between Israel and the Arabs in 1947-1948 and, because of the situation, was semi-institutionalized in the area and its active to this day.

The second operation authorized in the region, the notorious United Nations Emergency Force, authorized in the brick of the Suez crisis, is considered to be the first *per se* peacekeeping operation, and its mandate was to watch over the withdrawal of Israelian troops from Egyptian soil and watch over the demarcation line between the two states.

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Lash, *Dag Hammarskjöld: Custodian of the Brushfire Peace*, (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (1948), United Nations Emergency Force (1956), United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (1958), United Nations Emergency Force II (1973), United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (1974), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (1978).

Because of its apparent success, in 1958, while the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon was deployed, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld released a document in which he presented the main principles the peacekeeping operations should embody whenever they are to be deployed<sup>6</sup>. Of these, the most important were the ‘holy trinity of peacekeeping’<sup>7</sup>, namely: the consent of states, impartiality, and the use of force only in self-defense cases.

The first of these principles, the consent of states, was of high importance and of debate, as it proved to be the main reason the then Secretary-General, U Thant, decided to withdraw the UNEF forces from the region in 1967, just before the beginning of the 6 Day War. From the perspective of constructivist theory, by which international organizations can impose norms of behaviour between states and regulate their interaction, it would have been a hypocrisy of the UN to refuse to withdraw UNEF in order to prevent the 1967 War and it would have also meant that it violated the UN Charter’s articles and peacekeeping principles. Thus, the criticism that has been brought to the organization is somehow not founded on the basis the way the UN is organized and operated and the Secretary-General had to conform to the decision of the host state.

The period between 1965, last authorized operation during the Classic Cold War, and 1973, the first during the Détente period, has been identified by Harry Wiseman as the ‘Dormant Period’, when the UN maintained the operations that were already authorized. From the perspective of the situation in the Middle East, it has been characterized by persisting disputes and intermittent conflicts, between Egypt, who was unhappy with the results of the 1967 War, and Israel, who usually followed retaliations against the actions of its neighbors.

### **The Yom Kippur War and United Nations involvement.**

The situation witnessed some changes at the beginning of 1970s, as the period described by Egyptian commentator Mohamed Heika of „No Peace. No War”, emerged after the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser in September 1970. His successor, Anwar Saddat, was unhappy with the situation established after 1967 and took into consideration to start another war to change the tides of the last war in favor of the Arabs. This course

---

<sup>6</sup> United Nations General Assembly Document A/3943, <https://undocs.org/A/3943>.

<sup>7</sup> Alex Bellamy, Paul Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 174.

of action eventually led to an increase in armament by the Egyptians and by the end of 1972 Soviet arms were flooding in the country<sup>8</sup>.

The context remained the same for the whole period of 1973 and eventually led to the so-called Yom Kippur War on 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1973, when the Egyptians and Syrian troops attacked Israel from different sides on the Jewish holy day. Despite the initial setback and being caught by surprise, the Israelis eventually managed to push back the invaders and advanced into the territory of the two sides. In this context, the United Nations activated its mechanisms and called on the Security Council to deal with the issue, while the Secretary General searched for an opportunity to make the organization important in the pursuit of keeping the peace.

The Security Council met several times to discuss the issue, firstly from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 1973, but failed to adopt a decision as a result of the position of the two superpowers, who were more open to assist their clients in the conflict. At one point, there was the prospect of a direct superpower confrontation, as the Soviet resupply of Egyptian troops might have taken the Soviet Union in a confrontation with Israel and, automatically, with the United States, both powers placing their troops on low-alert level. With the prospect of a direct confrontation, there were improvements in the discussions and negotiations in the Security Council, from 22 to 25 October, several resolutions being passed. The most important ones were Resolution 339 by which it asked the Secretary-General to 'dispatch United Nations observers to supervise the observance of the cease-fire between the forces of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt'<sup>9</sup>; and Resolution 340 by which it increased the number of observers and it took into consideration the deployment of a United Nations Emergency Force in the area<sup>10</sup>.

After the authorization of the peacekeeping operation, officially on 27<sup>th</sup> of October with Resolution 341<sup>11</sup>, troops were able to deploy on the demarcation lane between the two sides and the operation was active in four phases. The first, from October 1973 to January 1974, was to stop the

---

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth R. Dombroski, *Peacekeeping in the Middle East as an International Regime*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 74-75.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations General Assembly Document S/RES/339(1973), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/339\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/339(1973)).

<sup>10</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 340 adopted on 25 October 1973), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/340\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/340(1973)).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations General Assembly Document S/RES/341(1973), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/341\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/341(1973)).

fighting and prevent any movement from the Israeli or Egyptian army. The second, until October 1975, was to observe the buffer zones between the two sides. The third, from 1975, was a further extension of the observation of the buffer zones because of the accords Henry Kissinger obtained from the Egyptians and the supervision of army withdrawals from the demarcation lanes. The fourth, and last, was characteristic for the last authorized mandate, from May to November 1979, when the operation was slowly withdrawn because of the new position adopted by the Soviet Union in the Security Council<sup>12</sup>.

Speaking of achievements, UNEF II was a great success of a peacekeeping operation as it managed to prevent an escalation of the conflict, supervised the demarcation lines and the ceasefires, as well as it observed the withdrawal of troops from the region. It can be argued, though, that it benefited from the mediation it was offered by the United States in the region and from the famous ‘shuttle diplomacy’ of Kissinger, by which it managed to sign a series of agreements, the most important being the disengagement one from 1974<sup>13</sup>.

### **The role played by the Secretary-General in the crisis.**

*Before the adoption of resolutions by the Security Council.* During the 1973 War, several personalities played a key role in limiting the conflict as to prevent its extension in the superpower rivalry. Of these, we already named Henry Kissinger, the then US Secretary of State, who, by his known ‘shuttle diplomacy’ managed to obtain a key series of agreement to limit the war. Besides him, however, was also Kurt Waldheim, Secretary General of the United Nations from 1972 and who was the main architect of UNEF II, its deployment and activity.

In his memoirs, *In the Eye of the Storm*, he argued that he ‘inherited’ the Middle East crisis from his predecessor, U Thant, and that he tried, since assuming mandate, to mediate the conflict, but he managed not to do so. To this end, in 1973 he underlined the serious situation in Middle East, but he was not believed so by the officials from main capitals involved. Thus, he informed Kissinger of the possibility of another war between Egypt and Israel, but the US Secretary of State did not believe this information. Despite his Middle East tour in the summer of 1973, he

---

<sup>12</sup> Dombroski, *Peacekeeping in the Middle East*, 78-80.

<sup>13</sup> Paul F. Diehl, “Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II)”, in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, ed. Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 233-235.

didn't manage to find any solutions to the issue, as both Egypt and Syria demanded the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Sinai and Golan Heights, and Israel didn't believe the possibility of another war. What actually surprised Waldheim was the mistrust of Israel and United States in the informations he received from UNTSO of a probable war, even more when he considered the secret services of both states<sup>14</sup>.

The beginning of the conflict saw Waldheim being informed by UNTSO of the developments on the field and shortly after he was telephoned by Kissinger to contact the Syrians to restrain their attack, while the Secretary of State was to do the same with the Israelis and the Egyptians<sup>15</sup>. At a first glance, this would prove to be a confirmation of the importance the UN Secretary-General played in the crisis, as he was to be placed on the same position as Kissinger. However, in his memoirs, the US official has telephoned Waldheim after two hours he was informed of the crisis, before this telephone he called the Soviet ambassador to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin, followed by Mordechai Shalev, charge d'affaires at the Israeli Embassy, Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed el-Zayyat and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban. He contacted Waldheim asking him to inform the Syrians, who did not pick-up the phone at the call of the US Secretary of State, of the need to restraint from action. Moreover, Kissinger stressed in his memoirs that Waldheim was not able to influence substantive discussions, but he had the ability to foster procedural matters, such as organizing Security Council or General Assembly meetings<sup>16</sup>.

Despite the course of action, the Security Council debated the subject only from 8<sup>th</sup> of October onwards when the matter came on the agenda of the Council and positions from the main parties were presented. The official position of the Secretary General was presented via a statement circulated to the member states on 11 October, in which he reacknowledged the main role of the Council to maintaining the peace and security, but he feared that after five days of war, no progress has been made and called upon member states of the Council to find the needed mutual cooperation to turn 'this tragic conflict into a starting-point for a new effort at a real settlement'<sup>17</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Kurt Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, (Maryland: Adler&Adler, 1986), 56-59.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, (New York: Simon&Schuster Paperbacks, 1982), 326-329.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations General Assembly Document S/11021, <https://undocs.org/S/11021>.

From the perspective of constructivist theory, the appeal of the Secretary-General might be an important factor that influenced the behavior of the involved parties to reconsider their action and to seek and end to the conflict. On the other hand, as even Waldheim acknowledged, his appeal might have been as ‘drops of water falling on a stone’, but he further argued that it was his duty to ‘give voice to the yearning of people everywhere for peace’<sup>18</sup>.

However, the situation on the field did not improve immediately after the announcement, and only after the Israelis managed to push back and advance in the territory of Egypt, did the Security Council cooperate and passed the resolution 338, 339, 340 and 341, by which it urged the involved parties to refrain from action, sign ceasefires and authorize observers and UNEF II troops to manage the situation.

Thus far, the role of the Secretary General in the context of the Yom Kippur War was limited to the procedural matters it was empowered by the UN Charter. The Security Council, being the main organ responsible with the maintenance of international peace and security, was, at this phase at least, the sole actor who had to adopt measures in order to limit the conflict. The role of Kurt Waldheim was to contact the Syrians to restrain from action, which, of course, did not happen, and to give voice to the call for peace of the whole world, something which is to be considered from the main administrator of the organization whose purpose was ‘to protect future generations from the scourge of war’.

*During and after the authorization of UNEF II.* Even though Kurt Waldheim had little to no impact during the approximately two-week period in which the sides fought each other, his contribution towards the peace emerged when the Security Council decided to work together towards the end of war in Middle East. Thus, on 23<sup>rd</sup> October he called Kissinger to suggest him about the possibility of organizing a peacekeeping mission with troops from small countries to secure the combat areas and that the Secretary of State should consider this possibility in the Security Council<sup>19</sup>. On his side, Kissinger told the Secretary General that he would consider the problem with his allies, but in his memoirs, he followed the plan that was envisaged by him at the start of the conflict, which was to restore the status quo ante by a joint cooperation with the Soviets<sup>20</sup>. This suggestion proved to be a success in

---

<sup>18</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 343 and 412.

the fact that, later, in the dialogue with the Israelis, Kissinger suggested the position of the United States regarding the mobilization of 'UN observers' on the front line. However, the negotiations between the superpowers were not that simple and was, by no means, influenced by Kurt Waldheim, who was only seen as an instrument of the implementation of the decisions taken by the high officials.

In his memoirs, Kissinger explained how he negotiated with the Soviets the content of the resolution, the position of the Americans being very clear: that of not sending troops from the members of the Security Council, as to prevent the direct implication of the Soviets or of its allies<sup>21</sup>. Despite these negotiations, the decision of the Security Council was the adoption of another resolution, 339, which called upon the respecter of cease-fire and instructed Kurt Waldheim to mobilize observation patrols<sup>22</sup> from the existing UNTSO<sup>23</sup>. However, the resolution proved to be non-effective as the Israelis continued their attack and Sadat called upon the US and the USSR to intervene and supplement the observation patrols. In backing Sadat, the Soviets decided to support this proposal if was introduced in the Security Council. On the night of 24<sup>th</sup> October, Kissinger was informed by Dobrynyn that Brezhnev has decided to support a unilateral intervention by the Soviets in the Middle East, with or without the Americans. This has proved to be the highest point of tension in the crisis, as the American troops were placed on maximum alert for the night of 24 to 25 October<sup>24</sup>.

The crisis managed to be defused by a proposal coming from the representative of Yugoslavia, Mr. Mosjov, in the Security Council 1749<sup>th</sup> meeting of 24 October, who proposed that the previous resolution, 339, be reinforced by the rehabilitation of a United Nations Emergency Force in the area<sup>25</sup>. The proposal went further and was materialized in a resolution proposal, no. 11046<sup>26</sup>, with several modifications being made

---

<sup>21</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 416-419.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 339 (1973), 23 October 1973, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/339>.

<sup>23</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 62.

<sup>24</sup> More on the talks of these days see Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 420 – 426.

<sup>25</sup> Record meeting of the UN Security Council, 1749. held on 24 October 1973, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/13907?ln=en>.

<sup>26</sup> Revised draft resolution of the UN Security Council, S11046/Rev.1, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/489334?ln=ar>.

at the 1750<sup>th</sup> meeting of 25 October<sup>27</sup> when resolution 340 was adopted<sup>28</sup>, with the last point, regarding the cooperation of all member states with previous resolutions being eliminated.

The superpower crisis was defused as resolution 340 mentioned that the permanent members of the Security Council will not contribute with troops to the new peacekeeping operations, the second United Nations Emergency Force. However, despite the passing of this resolution, the in-terrain situation remained tensioned as the Israelis continued to encircle the Egyptian Third Army. In this context, Kurt Waldheim was contacted by the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs, Ismael Fahmy, who presented him the situation and urged him and the Americans, by asking Waldheim to inform Kissinger, to urgently deploy the peacekeeping troops between the two armies<sup>29</sup>. The situation began to be tensioned once again as the same message was transmitted to Nixon by Anwar Sadat. The Soviets decided to abstain from taking any action and the Americans were furious with the Israelis, threatening to deliver non-military aids to the trapped Egyptian 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. The result of these actions was that on 27<sup>th</sup> October the Egyptians accepted to talk about a cease-fire with the Israelis at Kilometer 101 of the highway of Cairo to Suez<sup>30</sup>.

The importance of the United Nations in this context was a special one. The organization was to supervise these talks and, along with the Red Cross, was to provide aid to the Egyptian army. The importance of the Secretary General in this regard was also of high importance, as he was to take care of the bureaucratic and operational proceedings for the deployment of UNEF II. Thus, in his memoirs he stressed the difficulties in making such a request by the Security Council fully operational, with him needing to find the most suited states to contribute to the peacekeeping force taking into consideration the polarization of the international stage. Because of this, he argued that 'no two (operations) are quite alike in their genesis. Except in the broadest terms, each must be organized in accordance with a specific set of political implications.'<sup>31</sup> In deploying the troops, Waldheim decided as a first step to move troops from the operation in Cyprus, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in

---

<sup>27</sup> Record meeting of the UN Security Council, 1750. held on 25 October 1973 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/13908?ln=en>.

<sup>28</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 340 adopted on 25 October 1973, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/340\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/340(1973)).

<sup>29</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 63-64.

<sup>30</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 426 – 441.

<sup>31</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 64.

Cyprus, then to wait for the usual troop contributing countries, from Europe (Austria, Finland, Sweden), Asia (India) and Africa (Nigeria), as the situation on the ground was tensioned. As a result, by the end of 26<sup>th</sup> October, the UN had already mobilized 600 troops in the region under the command of general Siilasvuo, from UNTSO. He did so by informing the members of the Security Council before hand through a letter addressed to the president of the Security Council<sup>32</sup> which adopted the decision at the 1751 meeting of the Council<sup>33</sup>. What this shows is that the Secretary General, even in the implementation of the most basic steps for an operation to be fully functional, he must report and continuously inform the Security Council of his actions. However, this does not limit his impact over the actions to be taken, as some of his decisions were taken before informing the Council.

In the discussions with the members of the Security Council, Kurt Waldheim has stressed the importance of having the full support of the Council and, more importantly, of the permanent members as to have the operation fully functional, under the direct control of the organism through him, the Secretary-General<sup>34</sup>. Having been mentioned in resolution 340 that he had to report in 24 hours on the proceedings of the mobilization of the Second United Nations Emergency Force, Kurt Waldheim did so and at the 1752nd meeting of the Council his report was approved by the member states<sup>35</sup>.

Similar to Dag Hammarskjöld, Kurt Waldheim's report and strategy of the second United Nations Emergency Force was of high importance of avoiding a direct confrontation between the two superpowers<sup>36</sup> and was, as Brian Urquhart pointed out, designed to avoid the problems which were associated with the first UNEF<sup>37</sup>. The report<sup>38</sup> was seen as the equivalent of the same report given by the then Secretary

---

<sup>32</sup> UN Security Council document S/11049 of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1973, <https://undocs.org/S/11049>.

<sup>33</sup> Record meeting of the UN Security Council, 1750. held on 25 October 1973, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/13908?ln=en>.

<sup>34</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 65.

<sup>35</sup> Record meeting of the UN Security Council 1751, held on 26 October 1973, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/15890?ln=en>.

<sup>36</sup> Diehl, "Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II)", 239.

<sup>37</sup> Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 239–242.

<sup>38</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11052, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1973, <https://undocs.org/S/11052>.

General, Dag Hammarskjöld, in 1958 on regards to the peacekeeping operations to be authorized in the future<sup>39</sup>. Taking the recommendations further, Waldheim proposed three general considerations for the peacekeeping operations to be functional, which were: the full support of the Security Council; full cooperation of the operation with the parties involved; functioning as an integrated and efficient military unit<sup>40</sup>. These recommendations can be explained by the difficulties that the peacekeeping operations have faced before. Few examples can be given to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Congo (ONUC) who lacked the support of all the members in the Council and who faced grave consequences on the ground. The losses of this operation are also attributed to the lack of a clearly defined status in the region and the casualties can also be explained because it couldn't function as an efficient united military unit. The most notorious lack of cooperation of the parties involved is regarded to the UNEF, who, in its years of functioning from 1956 to 1967, had the possibility to function only on the Egyptian part, the Israelis refusing to have blue berets on its territory. As a result, when the support of Cairo was withdrawn in June 1967, the operation had nothing to do than to withdraw from the region and was left without the possibility to prevent the 6 Days War of 1967. Because of the suggestions of Waldheim, the next Cold War peacekeeping operations that were authorized benefited from the support of the Council, of the parties involved, and functioned as a military unit.

In the report, besides the above-mentioned recommendations, Waldheim stressed the importance of the operation to be under the control of the Security Council through him, the Secretary General, who would also exercise his authority through a Force Commander, appointed by Waldheim with the consent of the Council. This way, Waldheim hoped, the operation would not fall into desuetude and the Council would be held accountable for its proper functioning. Furthermore, Waldheim referred to the other aspects which were also considered important by Hammarskjöld, such as: the operation benefiting from freedom of movement and communication; the troops must benefit from immunities and privileges; the operation was not to get involved in the conflict and remain impartial; the troops would use force in self-defense cases only and the contributing countries were going to be selected by the Secretary General,

---

<sup>39</sup> UN General Assembly Document A/3943, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1973, <https://undocs.org/A/3943>.

<sup>40</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11052, 1.

in consultation with the Council, bearing in mind the principle of equitable geographical representation<sup>41</sup>. Regarding the administrative parts of the operation, UNEF II was to be constituted from around 7,000 troops, with logistic troops provided by all member states on voluntary basis, the permanent member inclusive, with a renewal of the mandate at six months, while estimative costs were as high of 30,000,000\$, the costs being considered expenses of the organization by all member states<sup>42</sup>.

Following the report of the Secretary-General, the Security Council coined his view over the peacekeeping operation by adopting resolution 341 on 27th October 1973<sup>43</sup>. The operation was eventually made up of troops from various countries, mostly neutral, with the exception of Canada and Poland<sup>44</sup>. The first was included by Waldheim because he knew the experience of the Canadians in completing logistical missions in other peacekeeping missions and the decision to include them came 'natural'. Whereas the Polish contingents were included after the Soviets and their allies raised their voice with regards of including a NATO member country in the operation. The mission reached its maximum in February 1974, after it became fully operational in January 1974 after the disengagement agreements were completed<sup>45</sup>.

When we're referring to the role played by Waldheim in the authorization of the mission, one could tell that his view was the most important one and that the Security Council members approved his vision on how the operation should be like, without contesting his suggestions. Thus, despite not having a direct influence over the matter, Waldheim managed to play a role in the crisis.

*The authorization of United Nations Disengagement Observation Force.* Despite having been resolved partially the situation on the border of Israel with Egypt, the situation in the Golan Heights, territory of dispute between Syria and Israel after 1967, remained tensioned following the Yom Kippur War and local incidents and skirmishers were common. In this context, Secretary of State Kissinger had also had a great impact on the solving of the issue with his known 'shuttle diplomacy' by which he managed to get both the Egyptians and Syrians to talk about compliance

---

<sup>41</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11052, 2.

<sup>42</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11052, 3.

<sup>43</sup> UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/341(1973), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/341\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/341(1973)).

<sup>44</sup> Diehl, "Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II)", 231.

<sup>45</sup> Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 67-68.

with the ceasefire<sup>46</sup>. The Military Working Group of The International Peace Conference on The Middle East, started in December 1973, managed to convince both sides to sign a disengagement agreement in May 1974. The implementation of the agreement was led on the responsibility of UNEF II and set the stage for another operation, the United Nations Disengagement Observation Force, to watch over the agreement<sup>47</sup>. The Security Council agreed on the authorization of the mission with the adoption of resolution 350 on 31 May 1974<sup>48</sup>.

The operation was mandated to supervise the 1974 ceasefire between Israel and Syria and facilitate the redeployment of Syrian and Israeli armed forces. UNDOF's role was altered to overseeing a restricted buffer zone on the Golan Heights between Israeli and Syrian forces and monitoring force and armaments restrictions in specified zones once the phased withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian units was completed. The lack of a concrete peacemaking procedure however<sup>49</sup>, as was the case between Israel and Egypt, made the operation to semi-institutionalize in the region and to be renewed every six months by the Security Council since 1974.

The importance of Waldheim in the authorization of this operation was limited as was the case of UNEF II, but the Secretary-General had an impact over the administrative parts of the process. He participated at the Peace Conference at Geneva and was a mediator, along the Americans and Soviets, of the negotiation talks between the Israelis, the Egyptians, and the Syrians, even though it was a meeting at foreign ministers' level only<sup>50</sup>. However, once the agreements on the authorization of a peacekeeping operation were signed<sup>51</sup>, Waldheim started working on what this operation should look like and how to better implement it. Thus, he informed the Council on who's going to sign the agreement in name of the UN<sup>52</sup> and, the next day, he offered a report on the organization of the

---

<sup>46</sup> On more on how the negotiations between the three sides developed during 1973 – 1974 see Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 576-780.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206430/>.

<sup>48</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 350, 31 May 1974, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/350\(1974\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/350(1974)).

<sup>49</sup> Dombroski, *Peacekeeping in the Middle East*, 81.

<sup>50</sup> On his personal contribution over the peace conference see Waldheim, *In the Eye of the Storm*, 68-73.

<sup>51</sup> For the disengagement agreement and the protocol for the authorization of the peacekeeping operation see Annex A and Annex B of UN Security Council Document S/11302/Add.1, 30 May 1973 <https://undocs.org/S11302/Add.1>, 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11302, 29 May 1974, <https://undocs.org/S/11302>.

disengagement force and the responsibilities of the UN, following closely the provisions which were coined in the protocol signed by Israel and Syria<sup>53</sup>. His decision of drawing troops to form the new operation from the UNEF II was praised during the Security Council meeting 1774 and his report was adopted during the same meeting<sup>54</sup>. He first drew the Austrian and Iranian troops from the UNEF II and were later joined by troops from various neutral countries, such as Peru, Finland, Philippines, but also by Canada and Poland who, as in the case of UNEF II, were given to complete logistical tasks<sup>55</sup>.

### Conclusions.

The United Nations contribution to the keeping of peace was to some extent the same as it was during the first phase of the Cold War. If then the organization intervened and wanted to prevent the extend of a local conflict to the general confrontation between the superpowers and it had to intervene through various ways, such as organizing special sessions of the General Assembly (as was the case with UNEF), during the D tente period, the superpowers acknowledged the importance of the organization in fulfilling their decisions and made full use of its powers. Thus, as Norrie MacQueen, argued:

*'(the) UN was to some degree just an executive wing of superpower diplomacy...The UN's institutional role in this was to manage the practical implementation of faits accomplis arranged by the senior negotiators of the two cold war superpowers.'*<sup>56</sup>

The Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, had a serious contribution to the solving of the Middle East crises of the 1970s despite his limitations by the UN Charter. As a result, despite not being considered into decisions taking, he was acknowledged by the representatives of the superpowers, and most importantly by Henry Kissinger, as an important actor for the implementation of the decisions taken by the members of the Security Council. As was shown, Waldheim was present whenever decisions were to be taken, he spoke in the name of the world when he considered that he

---

<sup>53</sup> UN Security Council Document S/11302/Add.1, 1.

<sup>54</sup>Record meeting of the UN Security Council, 1774. held on 31 May 1974, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/54806>.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Rudloff, Paul F. Diehl, "United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF)", in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen (eds.), 239.

<sup>56</sup> MacQueen, *The United Nations*, 77.

needed to, and he was available to the requests advanced to him by the Americans.

At a first glance we could argue that his influence was somehow limited as he couldn't have an influence over the substantial decisions, but he was of importance when referring to the operational and logistical implementation of these decisions. As was shown, Waldheim's reports and views over how the peacekeeping operations should look like were not contested by the members of the Security Council and his view was voted almost unanimously. As was analyzed by Silke Weinlich, the Secretariat and the Secretary-General have a degree of autonomous action regarding the implementation of decisions which make it possible for them to have a say when it comes to keeping the peace. Thus, borrowing the P-A approach on the possibilities of international bureaucracies to develop preference and resist state pressure, certain characteristics have an impact over the influence of these bureaucracies to have a say over the implementation of decisions, such as size, permanent character, organizational culture, mandate, and funding are essential resources for autonomous action<sup>57</sup>.

In our case, the size of the Secretariat during Waldheim's term was enough expanded, as he benefited from the previous experiences and institutions developed with the authorization of other peacekeeping operations. The permanent character of the United Nations, and indirectly the Secretary-General, as an actor in the Middle East crises was another characteristic which offered the chance for Waldheim to have a greater say in the tumultuous situation, despite the common misperception that he was only fulfilling the decisions taken by the superpowers. In what comes to the organizational culture of the Secretariat during the 1970s, the previous terms of U Thant and especially of Dag Hammarskjöld have taken the organism to a form of organization that was perceived as a political actor. Hammarskjöld based these claims on chapter XV of the UN Charter and, especially, on article 100 who mentioned that the Secretariat and Secretary-General 'shall not seek or receive instructions from any government'<sup>58</sup>. The other two essential characteristics, mandate, and funding were supported by the Security-Council. In the case of mandate, the Council agreed at the biannual reports of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the operations, of UNDOF to this day.

---

<sup>57</sup> Silke Weinlich, *The UN's Secretariat Influence on the Evolution of Peacekeeping*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 68-88.

<sup>58</sup> Weinlich, *The UN's Secretariat Influence on the Evolution of Peacekeeping*, 71.

In the case of funding the operations, Waldheim wanted to avoid the disputes over financing peacekeeping missions, as was the case for the operation in Congo, and mentioned the need for the missions to be financed by the contribution of all member states of the UN.

Taking the above into consideration, the actions of Waldheim during the crises were somehow at the limit of having an influence over the crises and receiving instructions from the superpowers. Indeed, he was responsible in front of the Security Council for his actions, but his spectrum of maneuver was limited to the area that was permitted by the permanent members. When he had the opportunity to have an influence over the situation, as was in the case of the form the peacekeeping operations should have, Waldheim vision was presented and accepted by the Security Council. In this regard, we can mention his report on UNEF II, S/11052, where he presented his vision on the peacekeeping operation and the need for the Security Council to fully back the mission to be successful. As a result, taking into consideration the previous experiences of the peacekeeping missions and that both operation that were authorized in the area were successful, UNEF II was withdrawn in 1979 because of the lack of support by the Soviets after the Camp David accords, and UNDOF obtained a 'tacit success'. The vision of Waldheim on the peacekeeping mechanism served as a guiding principle for the rest of the operations that were authorized during the Cold War period<sup>59</sup>.

Consequently, we can argue that in terms of influence, the Secretariat, and especially the Secretary-General, had a medium impact on the crises. Of course, it was not possible for them to have a say on the mandate of the operation or on what the UN should do during the crises, as this is a prerogative of the Security Council, but the influence of the administrative head of the organization could be identified in the form of the operations – in terms of number, composition and so on.

The present paper's purpose was to assess to which extent did the Secretariat and, especially, the Secretary-General has an influence over international crises. It tried to do so by focusing on the case of the Middle East crises of the 1970s. Therefore, we can argue, even when we're referring to the situation in Ukraine that the administrative head of the United Nations has a medium influence over the situations, as he must be mandated by the Security Council in doing so. In the case of Waldheim, he was acknowledged by the permanent members as a political actor on the international stage and participated in mediating the situation, both at

---

<sup>59</sup> Dombroski, *Peacekeeping in the Middle East*, 91.

international conferences and by visiting the capital of each state. His view over the situation had the possibility to be presented, adopted, and implemented, because the Security Council mandated him to do so through the resolutions. Coming back to our days, it will be interesting to see to what extent is the present Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, going to have an influence over the crisis in Ukraine, if he will be tasked to do so by the Council, and how he's going to address the issue.

The limits of this paper are given by the analysis of the crises and the fact that, due to the limitations of the text, another important parts of the Middle East agenda of the 1970s had to be left aside. It will be interesting to see what the actions of Kurt Waldheim were from 1974 to 1979, what were his reports on the situation for the extension of the mandates, how the operation in Lebanon was formed and organized, and if he had the same influence and view over the mission as was the case for the first two or not.

## **Restaurare / Restoration**

