



Is the United Nations still relevant?

Description

Theme:

- The United Nations (UN) is not able to end the Russia-Ukraine & Israel-Hamas wars. So, there are debates worldwide about the inability of the UN to establish peace in these regions and also about the relevance of the UN in the present times.

Background:

- Before the establishment of the United Nations, the 'League of Nations' was established in 1920 to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security. but it ceased operations in 1946. League of Nations failed because it couldn't stop the second world war.
- United Nations was established on 24th October 1945 to promote peace and prevent war through diplomacy.
- United Nations has several bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) etc. The two principal bodies of the UN are the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). UNGA allows the members to discuss, debate and make recommendations on global issues, whereas the UNSC is responsible for maintaining international peace & security. UNSC is the most powerful organ of the United Nations.

Yes – the United Nations is still relevant:

- United Nations is still relevant because it is actively working to maintain peace within the international community. Since it was established, It promoted international economic development and built good relations among countries.
- It is actively working on the development in several countries and tackling global challenges by forming subsidiary organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO etc.
- It is spreading the spirit of democracy in member countries. It is also working on protecting human rights

in the member countries.

- It is very much needed now because many countries are turning to Nationalism and preferring it over international cooperation.
- The fact that the UN has promoted technological and economic development since 1945 and is still promoting proves the point that the UN is still relevant.
- Even though the UN has failed to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic, it can work effectively to prevent future pandemics. And it would be too idealistic to expect any institution to succeed all the time. With information sharing & international cooperation, the member countries can save the world from future pandemics with the help of the UN.
- Global challenges such as terrorism, food crisis, and water scarcity need global solutions. For that, we do not have any alternative to the United Nations as of now.

No – United Nations is not relevant in the 21st century:

- The powerful organ of the UN, which is the UNSC is not relevant to the present times. It has only 5 permanent members (the US, UK, Russia, China, France) + 10 non-permanent members. This is resulting in the misuse of power by the 5 permanent members using their veto power. They often block key decisions, which are very much needed by other nations. There is no representation of developing countries, African countries & Southern Hemisphere countries in the UNSC permanent members. This doesn't suit the present times, which emphasises the need for reforms.
- Currently, the national interests of the permanent five members are in conflict. As a result, the UNSC is not able to undertake any meaningful action.
- World Health Organisation(WHO) has miserably failed in preventing the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The world has changed so much since 1945, but the UN hasn't changed at the same pace. After 2008, the world is transitioning towards multipolarity, which means there are many important global powers. However, the UN is currently not representing the same.
- The funding for the UN is influencing its operations. This is constituting to misuse of power. The United States is its largest donor to the UN.
- Still, billions of people are living in poverty, which makes us wonder whether we need a new international organisation to work effectively on global challenges.
- Certain nations have expressed grievances against the UN, asserting that it encroaches on their sovereignty. Such actions are not appropriate in the 21st century.
- The fact that regional organisations and other small international organisations are growing is proving that the UN is losing its relevance.
- The UN failed to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Russia-Ukraine war, which was started in 2022 has been going on for more than 600 days. Many lives have been lost in this war, but the UN is not able to stop this war. The Israel-Hamas war, which was started in 2023 caused loss of lives and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The UN is not able to bring peace in this region either.

What needs to be done:

- As many countries are suggesting, veto power should be eliminated and UNSC should be expanded to have a better representation of member countries. There is a dire need for

reforms in the UNSC. It should have a power balance.

- New UN bodies should be created to tackle other global challenges like pandemics to make it more relevant.
- There is a need to increase transparency and improve information sharing, the lack of which led to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Funding should be brought from diverse resources to avoid the misuse of power and dominance.

Conclusion:

The United Nations is still relevant to the present times but is in need of reforms. UNSC should be reformed to suit the 21st century. Better transparency and information sharing can make the UN a much more effective organisation. Moreover, member countries should work proactively to stop wars and promote the establishment of peace.

Your Turn...

Do you think the UN is still relevant in the contemporary world? Express your point of view through the comment section below. Subscribe to our blog to read answers to the trending GD topics.

References:

- [Is the United Nations toothless in ending wars](#)
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