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Awakening Toppers

Political Science & International Relations Crash Course

Lecture - 13

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1) Do you endorse that the United Nations needs major changes in its structure and functioning? Suggest changes for efficient improvements. (2016- 15 m)



- The United Nations was established following the after-effects of the World War II devastation. The UN which approximates to the form of global governance providing at minimum, a framework, through which the international community can address various social, economic and political concerns. **Secretary General of UN Dag Hammarskjöld** stated “UN was not created to take mankind to heaven but to save humanity from hell”.
- However, the UN has long been a controversial body. Given the breadth and significance of UN core mission, a gap between acceptance and performance has led to the same fundamental criticism being levelled at UN and its corporates body.

Challenges faced by UN

UN and its agencies is currently beset by a slew of problems, **including gross underfunding, bloated bureaucracy, divisiveness, and geopolitical competition among the Security Council’s permanent members.** These and other difficulties reduce its effectiveness and make it less relevant.

It can be said that the UN **has a lot to do but it has too little money,** as it is in a permanent financial crisis due to the unwillingness of many members to pay their contributions on time. As long as the UN’s budget remains tightly constrained, it cannot be effective.

Another issue is the **intransience among the P5 members** of the UNSC and issues over use of veto. The **misuse of Veto power** by the P5 such as by Russia over Ukraine invasion is a case in point.

UN fails to hold accountable peacekeepers who **commit human rights abuses,** particularly sexual abuse and exploitation. There is also the issue of an inflated structure **with defunct bodies.**

Need for reforms in UN

- Issues like the Covid19 pandemic, increasing rivalries between US, China and Russia, and Ukraine invasion have heightened the UN crisis.
- In order to remain relevant UN must innovate. UN officials and pundits are asking we are approaching a "new San Francisco moment" where there is a growing agreement that the UN is in pressing need of reforms which enhance its **efficiency, effectiveness, credibility and legitimacy**

Structural Reforms

- **General Assembly-** There is a need for better coordination between UNGA and UNSC. Since UNSC remains paralyzed due to veto power, the role of UNGA has become merely symbolic. PM Modi in 2021 underlined the "crisis of confidence" the UN faces. It has been suggested by experts that **UNGA should be given power to override veto by a special majority.**
- **UN Security Council-** Permanent membership of UNSC P5 is widely seen to be outdated, reflecting the great powers of the immediate post 1945 period. The expansion of the UNSC has been long overdue on the demand, especially from the so-called Group of 4 (G4) countries – Brazil, Germany, India and Japan – which advocate a permanent seat for all of them and was reiterated on the eve of 75th anniversary of UN in 2021.
- **Reforms in UN Principles - Article 2 Clause 7** of the UN Charter doesn't permit UN intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. However, post cold war period require greater intervention in domestic affairs. UN intervenes on the basis of UNGA resolution based on responsibility to protect.

Functional Reforms

A. Transparency in functioning of UNSC- India's former representative to the UN, **Hardeep Puri** in his book "Perilous Interventions - The security Council and the politics of chaos" has mentioned about the internal chaos in the decision making.

A. Veto Reforms- The requirement of unanimity amongst P5 states has effectively neutered the UN as the basis of collective security, apart from exceptional circumstances (Korea and Gulf wars). This has created in a sense **two UNs, one reflected in the security council, the other in the general assembly.**

A. Financial Reforms- UN Budget is not adequate in context of UN responsibilities. Countries do not pay their membership dues on time, US is the most frequent defaulter. In order to improve the financial situation of the United Nations, it can be given some independent sources of funding. E.g.- **Right to impose Tobin Tax** (Tax on International Financial Transactions).

- **UN Security Council- Dr Alon Ben-Meir** has suggested the following reforms for UNSC;-
 - The Security Council should expand from 15 to 21 member states.
 - Nine states or regional unions will be granted permanent membership with veto power: the EU, the US, Russia, China, India, Indonesia to represent Asian countries, Brazil to represent the Latin American countries, the Arab League, and the African Union.
 - Twelve other countries in the Security Council would rotate every two years based on the current format.
 - A resolution can only be vetoed if two countries exercise their veto power.
- There is a need to reimagine some of the UN agencies. The **Trusteeship council** has no work now. Either abolish this body or give new mandate to the body. E.g. Governing the global commons. (Space, Antarctic etc.). Similarly with regard to the Secretariat there is a need to address red tapism, right sizing of bureaucracy, greater representation from developing countries, training and capacity building.
- **Jeffery Sachs** underlines how UN needs to strengthen its expertise in areas such as ocean health, renewable energy systems, urban design, disease control, technological innovation, public-private partnerships, and peaceful cultural cooperation. Some UN programs should be merged or closed, while other new SDG-related UN programs should be created.
- **Hamad Al Kawari** argues that UN will have to abandon its old mindset and adopt institutional reforms that make it better equipped to address twenty-first-century challenges.

Conclusion - UN Secretary-General António Guterres in OUR COMMON AGENDA report argues that now is the time for a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations.

2) Do you agree that the UN has failed to contain transnational terrorism? Elaborate your answer with examples. (2014- 10 m)

Introduction of UN

Brief about Terrorism

UN's initiatives to contain transnational terrorism

Has UN failed in its role

Conclusion

- According to the **Preamble of the United Nations Charter**, the envisaged role of the UN was to **save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war** and to promote social progress and **better standards of life in larger freedom**.
- Terrorism is an essentially contested concept. According to radical theorists like **Chomsky and Falk**, terrorism amounts to killing of unarmed civilians by state and non- state actors. They further add that; state sponsored terrorism is more significant as it has more coercive capacity than non-state actors. For states, terrorism is '**soft option**' and war is '**hard option**' to influence policy of other states.
- As UN is the closest substitute of a world government, its role in curtailment of terrorism becomes all the more important. However, UN has failed to contain the transnational terrorism as stated by the **former foreign minister of Australia Gareth Evans** "*No other organization or body invokes as many dreams yet so many frustrations as the UN*".

UN's Failure to combat terrorism

- **Different interpretations**-The **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)** proposed by India, which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens has still **not been passed** by the UNGA due to **disagreements over the definition of terrorism**.

- **Deadlocks: UNSC Sanctions committee** has not been able to function according to its capacity due to the deadlock between P2 and P3. Countries use veto power in order to block terrorists from coming under sanctions. Eg in 2022, **China Blocked India's Move to list Abdul Rehman Makki**(US-designated terrorist) and the brother-in-law of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief and 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed to be sanctioned.
- **Exploitation of fault-lines**-UN Secretary-General António Guterres has highlighted that "Groups like Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates are continuing to grow in the Sahel and make inroads into Central and Southern Africa. They are exploiting power vacuums, longstanding inter-ethnic strife, internal weaknesses and state fragilities.
- **Complex relationships between terrorists and political establishments**-The magnitude of the challenge is further compounded by complex relationships between terrorists, armed groups and criminal networks, as well as the political upheaval caused by recent coups d'état.
- **Adoption of new forms**-There has been transformation of tactics which include unconventional forms of terrorism, including nuclear terrorism (for example, fabricating a dirty bomb, attacking a nuclear reactor, etc.), high-tech terrorism involving cyber attacks, ecological terrorism (for instance, the threat of destruction to the environment) and terrorist attacks aiming at destroying cultural heritage, as perpetrated by ISI.

UN Initiatives

- United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on **September 12 adopted Resolution 1368**, declaring "international terrorism as a threat to international peace and security" and expressing its "readiness to take all necessary steps to...combat all forms of terrorism."
- **UN Office of Counter Terrorism**- leads and coordinates an all-of-UN approach to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. As the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, UNOCT scaled up its efforts to help Member States achieve a world free from terrorism by adapting and innovating to meet this challenging moment. In the unprecedented 2021 environment, promoting multilateral cooperation remained at the centre of UNOCT's work.
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** was established in 1997 as a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime.
- **Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee**- The Security Council may order coercive measures against individuals, in particular in connection with the fight against international terrorism. Such individuals are then targeted as members or supporters of entities posing a threat to peace. The sanctions, which are often called "**targeted sanctions**" or "**intelligent sanctions**", usually involve:

- In **Resolution 2462 (2019)**, the Security Council expressed concern at the flow of funds to terrorists and the need to suppress all forms of terrorist financing. In order to be more effective, targeted financial sanctions and other **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** mandatory measures need to be buttressed with risk assessment and typology identification, enhanced intelligence sharing and better cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Conclusion-

According to Vladimir Voronkov, head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), there is an urgent need for “inclusive, forward-looking, evidence-based approaches to build resilience” against terrorism.

To create an effective global counter terrorism regime, foremost step should be to arrive at consensus on definition of terrorism. Making Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) reach its logical end should be a priority for world community. There needs to be formation of **global alliance** based on overlapping consensus & not an alliance of convenience as per every country's real political gain.

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