

75 years of UN – Achievements and Failures

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As the political and economic architecture of the emerging global order has been altered, the UN should be reflective of the current trajectory, especially in the strategic and economic arenas. With the failures of its organs in tackling the new rising global issues, it should undergo reform to solve humanity's biggest problems.

In news: The year 2020 marks the 75th anniversary for the United Nations.

Placing it in syllabus: International organizations
Static dimensions

1. UN- Origin and its organs

Current dimensions

1. Success and failures
2. Overall reforms needed

Content:

UN- Origin and its organs:

- UN is an international organization founded in **1945** after the Second World War by 51 countries.
- It provides a forum for its **193 Member States** to express their views, through the **General Assembly, the Security Council** and other bodies and committees.
- It has **4 main purposes**–

1. To keep peace throughout the world;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations;
3. To help nations work together to improve the lives of

poor people, to conquer hunger, disease and illiteracy, and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedoms;

4. To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations to achieve these goals.

Organs of UN:

The **main organs of the UN** are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. All were established in 1945 when the UN was founded.



- The **General Assembly** is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly.
- The **Security Council** has primary responsibility, for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- The **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues.
- The **Trusteeship Council** provides international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven Member States (it is not functional now).
- The **International Court of Justice** is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations which settles, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States.
- The **Secretariat** comprises the Secretary-General and tens

of thousands of international UN staff members who carry out the day-to-day work of the UN.

Success and failures:

- The **UN defined, codified and expanded the realm of international law**, governing the legal responsibilities of States in their conduct with each other, and their treatment of individuals within State boundaries.
- The U.N. has **solved many violent conflicts, prevented wars, and saved millions of lives** .
- More than 560 **multilateral treaties** on human rights, refugees, disarmament, trade, oceans, outer space, etc..encompassing all aspects of international affairs were negotiated by the U.N.
- The **ECOSOC continually monitors the progress of development**, particularly in the light of the MDGs.
- It has created a new **UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management** which brings together government experts from all Member States to compile and disseminate best practices and experiences on geospatial information which helps in the context of sustainable development and humanitarian assistance.
- The **ICJ has a positive effect on the development of International Law** and the propagation of the principles of sovereignty, non-conquest, human rights and the rights of existence and self-defence of a state.
- The **ICJ provides an additional option for states to settle their disputes peacefully** through third party intervention, and this has reduced the threat of open war.

Failures:

- In 1970, though the **Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT)** was signed by 190 nations, all five superpowers owned nuclear weapons. Despite the NPT and Partial Test

Ban Treaty, several countries – North Korea, Israel, Pakistan, and India have developed nuclear weapons. Thus the **UN has failed to enforce regulations on offending nations.**

- Though the ICJ has resolved major international disputes, the **U.N.'s veto powers** have limited its effectiveness at critical times.
- **Human Rights violations are happening at conflict-prone regions** like Gaza-strip but UNSC has failed as the United States vetoes any action against Israel.
- The Arab Spring in the Middle East which caused thousands of deaths and regime changes, the rise of ISIS, gruesome killings might have been prevented if the Member States of the U.N. had the ability to resolutely act in a timely manner.
- But the **U.N. is not a world government, and it does not have a standing army of peace-keepers ready for deployment.**
- NGO workers from around the world have blamed that **vulnerable people are being denied representation at the UN by the dysfunctional nature of the NGO committee and its parent body, the Ecosoc.**
- The **ICJ is noted for its failures to successfully resolve inter-state disputes.** To date there are more than 30 unresolved frontier cases concerning land of greater value, which has never been submitted to the ICJ, because one party's claim is not on legal grounds.
- Major issues of peace and security between the more powerful states are rarely submitted as most governments tend to “consider the recognition of the jurisdiction of the court as infringing on their sovereignty”.
- **There is no real means of enforcing the ICJ's verdict.**

Overall reforms needed:

- The UN, in recent years, has faced a cash crunch. Hence there should be an **increase in funding** which is timely.

- Once the world is on a robust path to achieve the SDGs, the **need for peacekeeping and emergency-relief operations should decline** as conflicts diminish in number and scale.
- The 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.
- **UN's governance should be mended**, starting with the Security Council, the composition of which no longer reflects global geopolitical realities.
- The Western Europe and Other Group (WEOG) now accounts for three of the five permanent members (France, the United Kingdom, and the US) but Africa or Latin America has none.
- The **rotating seats on the Security Council do not adequately restore regional balance**.
- Seats for Asia, which represents the world's most dynamic and populous region should be increased.
- Any substantial reform can be achieved by **amending the UN Charter** which requires an affirmative vote and domestic ratification by two-thirds of UN member states.
- In addition to charter reform, **procedural changes, including greater transparency and closer consultations with troop-contributing countries** is required.

Mould your thought:

1. Though the UN is celebrating its 75th anniversary, the multilateral institution is not short of failures. Comment.

Approach to the answer:

- Write briefly about UN and its organs
- Write the failures of chief organs

- Jot down the success these organs have achieved
- Conclude with the necessity of reforms