



CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE UN

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introduction:

- Ever since its inception the UN faces one or the other challenges.
- Some are really poses challenge to its very existence.
- Following are some of the challenging issues which the UN faces today.
 1. Global terrorism,
 2. Balancing Rule of law & Non-interference,
 3. Gap between Principle and practice,
 4. Difficulties in preserving peace and security,
 5. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,
 6. Genocides, civil wars & ethnic conflicts,
 7. Problem of environmental degradation & epidemics,
 8. Resource crunch,
 9. Biological and chemical weapons, etc.

I. Global Terrorism:

- It is the most serious challenge to the world organization.
- The terrorist attacks on 11th Sept. 2001 on WTC in the US affected the world policy on terrorism.
- The way in which the UN deals with this challenge politically and legally defines its future role in the global system.

2. Balancing Rule of Law & Non-interference:

- It is very difficult for the UN to enforce the rule of law in a universal manner without affecting the principle of non-interference under the present Uni-polar world.
- It is very difficult for the UN to uphold the principle of sovereign equality of nations.
- In the eyes of the citizens of the world, the legitimacy of the world organization depends on the commitment to the rule of law.
- Such commitment is the essence of collective security principle as laid down in the UN Charter.
- Because, US is the strongest power, ever since the Soviet Union has collapsed.

3. Gap between Principle & Practice:

- In principle the UN Charter provides for sovereign equality among nations but the reality is that certain nations are more equal than the others.
- For example, the veto power of the big 5 in the Security council.
- A negative vote of any one of the big 5 can stall the decision of all others in it.
- This negative vote is called as veto power.
- Thus, there is a wide gap between realism & idealism.

4. Difficulties in preserving peace & Security:

- The deepening of the cold-war hostilities made it difficult for the UN to fulfill its function of preserving peace and security.
- The Soviet Union & China used their veto power to effectively block collective action.
- The gulf war of 1991 was only the second time in the UN's history(after the Korean war) that UN actually authorized & organized coalitions to enforce its mandate.
- UN has miserably failed in preserving peace even during the post cold war era.

5. Proliferation of weapons of Mass destruction:

- The UN is unable to meet the challenge posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Though the NPT was made to limit the spread of nuclear weapons but failed.
- It was a discriminatory treaty between the nuclear haves & nuclear have-nots.
- According to a report of the IAEA, 35 to 40 states have the knowledge to acquire nuclear weapons.

6. Genocides, civil wars & ethnic conflicts:

- Civil wars and ethnic conflicts are going on in different parts of the world like Sri-Lanka, Rwanda, Somalia, Timor, etc.
- Un is facing a great burden on the peace keeping operations in these areas.

7. Problem of environmental degradations & epidemics:

- Different rounds of talks on issues like global warming and environmental degradation were being held without any lasting solutions posing another area of challenge to the UN in the recent years.
- Controlling the spread of epidemics at the global level is another problem faced by it.

8. Resource Crunch:

- The UN is facing financial burden on peace keeping expenditures.
- Many developing countries owe arrears.
- This has hindered the ability of the UN to cope with new challenges.
- Most of its economic role has been transferred to the World Bank, IMF, WTO and the UN is only a powerless monitor.

9. Biological & Chemical weapons:

- The greater challenges before the UN of today and tomorrow will be that of preventing and monitoring the use and maintenance of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

REFORMING THE UN

- Some of the key areas where reform is required in the U are as follows –
 1. Security Council reform,
 2. General Assembly reform,
 3. Peace keeping,
 4. Collective legitimization, etc.

I. Security Council Reform:

- It needs to be reformed as the conditions that prevailed in 1945 were entirely different from those prevailing now.
- Its 5 permanent powers and 10 rotating (non-permanent) members do not represent the real distribution of powers & influence in the world.
- Many major countries are excluded from its membership.
- Abolish or modify the veto system.

2. General Assembly reform:

- The number of members in the UN has enormously increased as result, achieving consensus on many issues of significance has become very difficult.
- Hence, it is suggested that the Assembly refer more issues to the specialized committees and rely on majority vote rather than consensus.

3. Peace- keeping:

- It is suggested that the Un Should never undertake peace keeping missions unless there is adequate funding & support from the Security Council.
- More-over, it is also suggested that regional organizations like NATO should take up peace-keeping responsibilities under the UN mandate.

4. Collective Legitimization:

- In most of the instances where force has been used, UN had not given any sanctions to the nations.
- For example, recently the US and its allies used force against Saddam Husain of Iraq in which UN was required to give post-facto- legitimization.
- But such collective multilateral legitimization should be given only prior to the incident & not later.